PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

SWITZERLAND

BY

JOHN FINNEMORE

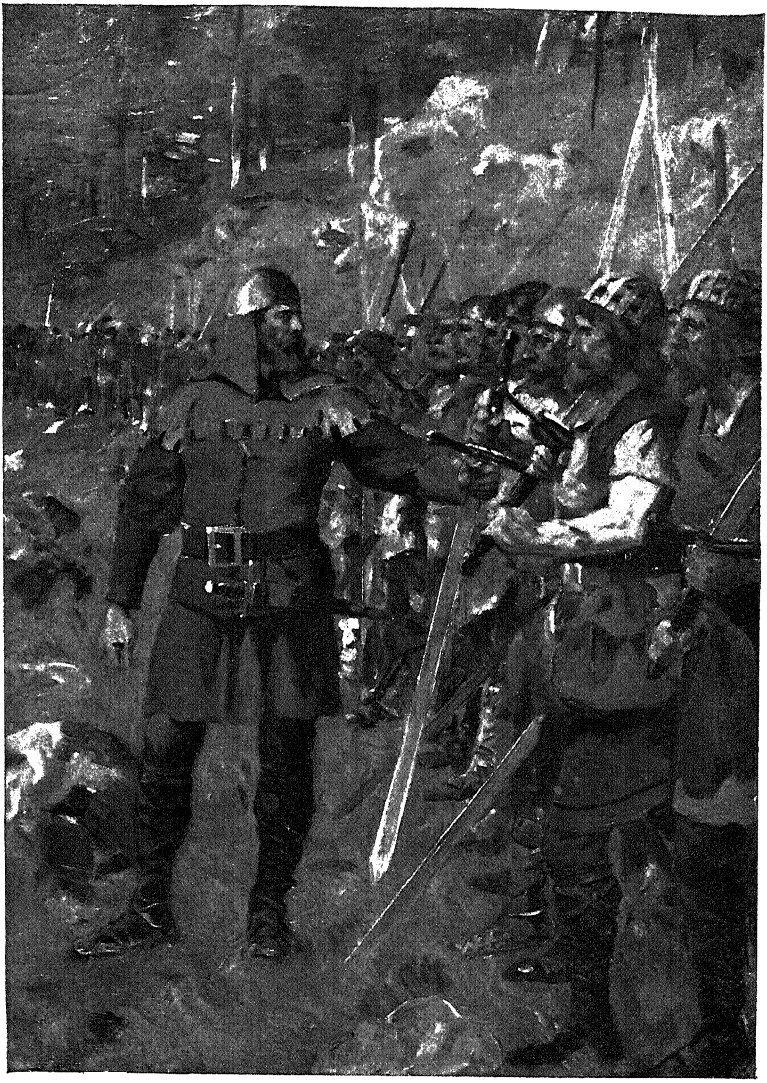
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ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED. *Page 31.*

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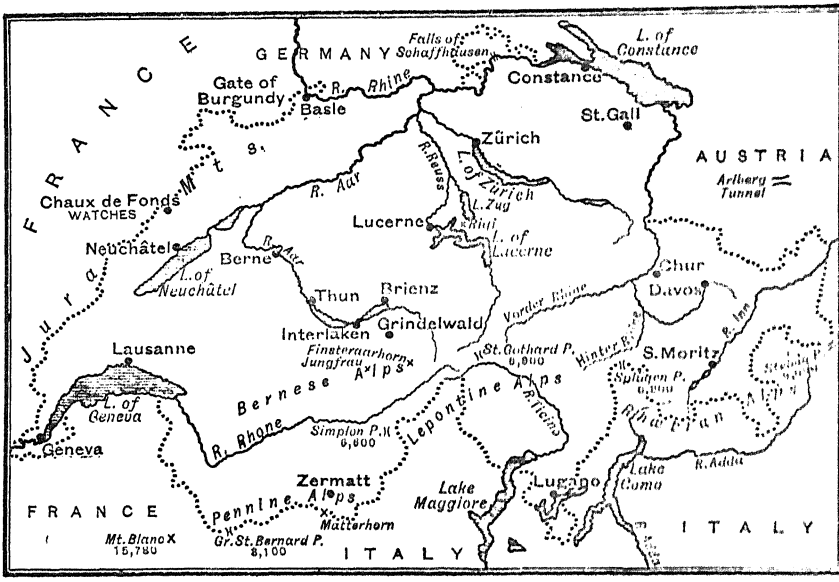
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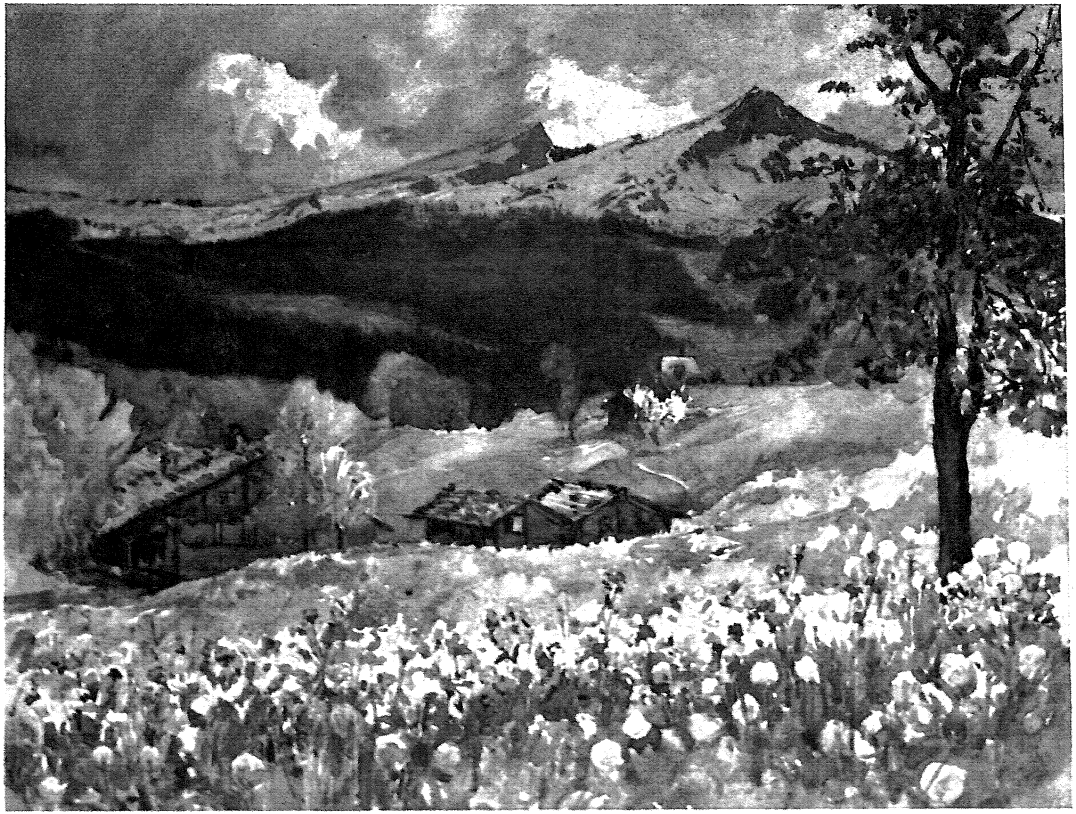
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SKETCH-MAP OF SWITZERLAND



SWITZERLAND

I

THE PLAYGROUND OF EUROPE

SWITZERLAND has been called by a famous writer "the playground of Europe." This is because people from all nations love to go to that little land in the centre of the Continent to spend their holidays, and to enjoy themselves in different ways. In a playground there are those who like to look on, and there are those who love to play hard and follow up every game with all their skill and strength. It is just the same in Switzerland. Some merely look from the distance at the white heads of the great mountains to be found there; others love to climb to the tops of the snowy peaks, braving discomfort, danger, and sometimes death, in order to reach those far-off summits.

It is the presence of the great mountain-chain of the Alps which gives Switzerland its greatest charm. Many of the immense heights rise above the line of perpetual snow, and winter reigns on their crowns while summer is hot in the valleys below. Among these great hills is to be found some of the noblest

scenery in the world: huge craggy cliffs overhanging lovely vales, where lakes, as blue as the sky, are fed by a thousand streams which leap down the hill-sides. The snow-covered heights are majestic in their splendour, and never more so than when the day is dying, and every peak glows rosy pink in the light of the sunset.

It is this wonderful beauty of their land which forms the wealth of the Swiss. They are thrifty, hard-working people, and make the utmost of what lies to their hands. Their workmen are skilful and industrious; their farmers till every inch of the soil which can be tilled, and win crops of hay from places where one would think none but a goat could climb. But for all that, they would be much worse off were it not for the stream of gold which flows steadily from the pocket of the foreigner.

A great part of the land consists of barren rock and snow-covered mountain, yielding nothing to farmer or herdsman. But the tourist comes from afar to look upon or climb among those lofty slopes, and hotels have sprung up in every corner of the land to afford him shelter and comfort. And in the owning and managing of these hotels much work is found for many people—and very profitable work, too.

It has been said that the Swiss host is a man who has "seasons to sell." This is quite true, and many a Swiss hotel-keeper can give you a choice of seasons on a summer's day. He has one hotel in the valley. Here it is full summer. The grapes are ripening on the trellises; the heat is so fierce that shade is a neces-

sity, and the village sleeps at midday in a sunny stillness, for it is too hot to move about.

A few thousand feet up he has another hotel, perhaps set near a broad sweep of Alpine meadow, where flowers are blooming in vast sheets of rich colour, and the air is sweet and fresh, and sharp at morning and evening. The season is spring, and summer has been left in the valley. Higher again stands a small hotel to accommodate climbers and those who wish for a nearer view of the ice-world of the upper Alps. Here a short journey carries one into a winter-land of frost and snow, of glaciers with ice many feet thick, of ice-slopes above deep descents, where a single false step would mean death to the unskilful climber.

The traveller in this little land soon discovers that, small as it is, the Swiss are not one people in origin and language. It is very far from that. Switzerland is a very strange mixture of races, religions, and languages. In the north and centre there are German-Swiss, and more Swiss speak the German tongue than any other. In the west the Swiss speak French, in the south Italian, and in the Grisons, the highlands in the south-eastern corner of the country, there are people who speak a language called Ladin, or Roumansch, a dialect which is a survival of Latin. Forms of religion vary as much as the tongues spoken: the Lutheran Protestant neighbours the strict Roman Catholic, and all live in peace. For despite the medley of races, tongues, and religions, the Swiss form one nation, and, whether German, French, or Italian, are

united to live or die in defence of their fatherland.

Love of country and love of freedom form the bond of union among these peoples. The Swiss are passionately fond of their mountains, and have fought many a fierce battle to keep them free from the feet of invading tyrants. For hundreds of years the country has been a republic, managing its own affairs, providing for its own safety, and offering the example of a peaceable and contented people, quite satisfied with what they have of their own, desiring to take nothing from a neighbour, and with minds fully made up that a neighbour shall take nothing from them.

II

A SUMMER ON AN ALP

WHAT is an *alp?* In the first place, it is not the icy summit, the thought of which springs at once to the mind when the word *alp* is mentioned. It is a green summer pasture, rich with tenderest, sweetest grass, and starred with myriads of flowers of the deepest and most vivid hues, mingled with blossoms of pure white and delicate primrose.

Bordering the fields of eternal snow there are wide stretches of open pasture-land, luxuriant with a rich

growth of grass and flowers during the short summer, and these pastures are the alps proper. From them the snow-crowned chain of peaks has gained its name.

Almost every Alpine village has its own alp, and cannot easily manage without it. Around the village lie the meadows. But these are shut up for hay in summer, for the hay-loft must be well stored in view of the long severe winter. Above the meadows come the belt of woodland to supply fuel for the winter fires; and far aloft, between the woodland and the snow-fields, stretch the alps, which supply the flocks and herds with the best of summer grazing while hay is made in the valley meadows.

These alpine pastures are dotted with small wooden châlets, where the shepherds live all the summer long. Men and animals stay together on the alp till the approach of winter drives them down to the shelter of the village, perhaps two days' journey below.

The day of the upward march for the alpine pastures is a great event in the Swiss year. On the morning of the journey the whole village is astir before the dawn. The animals are as full of joy as any among the merry crowd, for they hear the sound of the bell which is always borne before them. They know quite well what it means. They leap and frisk in their delight as the herd sets out in long procession for the pleasant upland meadows.

The finest animals lead the way, and from their necks hang the great chiming bells, while their horns are decked with flowers. Happiest of all are the boys who are now old enough to go aloft for the first time

and help the herdsmen on the pasture lands. As they go they sing a favourite song, which begins " On the alps above there is a glorious life " ; and a glorious life they find it. They climb up and up from the dull valley to the great open sweeps of mountain between the forest and the snow. Here each day is passed in the open air, basking in the sunshine, plucking the lovely flowers, breathing the sweet, fresh mountain air, drinking the delicious milk which the cows give in abundance, feeding as the latter do on the sweet young grass.

The animals show their delight in a fashion which no one can mistake. It is the pleasantest of changes for them, from the close stalls of the cow-shed to the rich, open airy pastures. So well do they understand the joys of the alps that an animal which has been left behind in the valley has often to be carefully watched. If it can get loose it will break away, and off it goes, climbing the slopes and following every turn of the way until it rejoins its companions on the heights.

The herds, again, show much intelligence. " The Alpine cow knows every bush and pool, the best grass plots, the time for milking ; it recognizes from afar the call of its keeper ; it knows when salt is good for it, and when to go to the butt or watering-places. It scents the approach of a storm, distinguishes unwholesome herbs, and avoids dangerous places. If a storm is expected, the cow-herds collect the cattle beforehand. The trembling animals stand in a body, with staring eyes and downcast heads, whilst the herdsmen go from one to another encouraging and coaxing each. When

this is done, however violent the thunder and lightning may be, and however heavily the hail may pour down upon the herd, not a cow will stir from the spot."

The milk of the animals is made into cheese, and great loads of cheeses are carried back into the valley when the snow-storms of early September announce the sad day of return. The châlets where the herdsmen sleep and make the cheeses are the simplest of dwellings. If woodland be at hand, the huts are built of logs, the crevices stuffed with moss. If it lies far up on the naked slopes it is built of rough stones, the cracks and joints also stuffed with moss, while for roof it has slabs of wood and sods of turf, weighted with great stones, lest the whole should be carried away in a whirlwind.

The herdsmen divide alps into cattle alps and goat and sheep alps. The cattle alps are, of course, the easier slopes, where the pasture lies in wide smooth sweeps, or in valleys easily to be reached. But the higher alps, or those only to be gained by rocky and dangerous paths, are kept for the sheep and goats, which climb nimbly into places where no cattle could go. Sometimes an alp will lie in the very midst of glaciers and snow-fields, or be composed of patches of grass in a wilderness of rocks, and such an alp can only be grazed by the sure-footed sheep or goats.

Among the herdsmen the shepherd's life is the dullest of all. Very often a single man is in charge of a flock of a thousand sheep or more, and he spends the whole summer with his charge, having nothing to do save watch them, for he has no cheese-making

with which to occupy himself. On the other hand, a cattle alp is a busy, lively place. The cows come home to be milked at dawn and dark; the herdsmen and the cheese-makers chat together; the cheeses have to be made, and almost every hour of the day has its task to speed the time along. Then, there are pigs to be looked after at a cattle alp, for pigs can be fattened on the whey left over from cheese-making.

On many alps the alp-horn is still used to call the cows home at milking-time. It is a huge wooden trumpet, often six feet in length, and a skilful performer can draw deep and powerful notes from its wide throat. Its compass consists of only a few notes, but when these ring and echo from height to height the effect is very striking and beautiful.

Most striking of all is the use of the alp-horn at the hour of sunset. On the loftier alps, to which no sounds of evening bell can climb, the alp-horn proclaims the vesper hour. As the sun drops behind the distant snowy summits, the herdsman takes his huge horn and sends pealing along the mountain-side the first few notes of the Psalm "Praise ye the Lord." From alp to alp he is answered by his brother herdsmen, and the deep, strong notes echo from crag to crag in solemn melody. It is the signal for the evening prayer and for repose. The cattle are gathered together and lie down for the short summer night, and the herdsmen go to their rest.

A Swiss Peasant Home

III

A SWISS PEASANT HOME

As a rule, the Swiss peasant has a comfortable home. Here and there, it is true, may be found people living in houses which are little better than rude wooden huts, but for the most part the Swiss people build themselves good, strong, handsome dwellings.

A Swiss châlet is both broad and long. This makes it very firm, and enables it to defy the most furious storm which can sweep down from the mountain heights. The first thing the builder does is to raise a strong wall to a height of about six or eight feet. Upon the foundation the upper part of the house is built, and this is of wood. The broad roof is of gentle slope, and is formed of sheets of pine-wood. Upon these pine-shingles heavy stones are sometimes laid, in order that the roof may not be torn away by the fierce gales of winter. Around the wooden part of the house a gallery runs, and this is sheltered by the broad eaves, which spring out well beyond the walls. When such a house is finished it has a very quaint and pleasing look, and it is as comfortable inside as it is charming without.

There are no living-rooms in the stone basement. This part of the house is given up in front to roomy cellars, where the produce of the fields and vineyards and orchards is stored; at the back to stables, cow-houses, and threshing-floor. The living-rooms are

above, and open on the gallery which runs round the house. There is a large room, where the family meet for their meals, and where they sit in the evening; and there is a smaller room—a kind of parlour—where the best furniture is kept, a room only used on grand occasions. Then, there is the best bedroom, and one or two smaller rooms, where the children sleep.

The furniture of these houses is strong and simple—large heavy tables and benches and dressers, made by the local carpenter, or very often by the owner himself, of dark walnut-wood. On the dresser in the living-room stand painted plates, the favourite ornament of a Swiss kitchen, and a great earthenware stove, often covered with green tiles, stands in a corner of the large apartment.

In these homes there is, as a rule, very little money, but a great plenty of those things necessary to human comfort. Money is very useful where everything has to be bought, but what has a fairly prosperous Swiss peasant to buy? Nothing save things like coffee, sugar, salt, and spices—things he cannot produce for himself.

In a corner of the largest bedroom stands a loom, at which the mother and daughters weave the fleeces of their sheep into strong home-spun cloth and thick warm flannel. Thus the family are clothed. In the garden, where glorious white lilies blossom in June, they grow vegetables. The vineyard gives them wine; the orchards give them fruit; the fields around their home give them corn; and the crops are stored in the ample cellars below the living-rooms. They store

apples and pears for the winter by cutting them into quarters and drying them carefully.

Their mode of living, too, is very simple. Meat is not often eaten; in many families it never appears on the table except on Sundays at the midday meal. Very rarely, then, is it fresh; in the storeroom hang pieces of dried beef, mutton, or in some parts, chamois. One Swiss delicacy—and it is very good indeed—consists of a joint of beef, which is first hung in the chimney and carefully smoked. It is then cured with salt and spice, and finally dried in the cold, clear winter air. When cooked it is very delicate and sweet in flavour.

The produce of the dairy takes a great share in feeding a Swiss peasant family. Milk, cream, butter, cheese, curds—all are greatly relished, and a favourite dish is made of sweet cheese-curds stewed in cream, and then baked with fresh butter.

Before the children go to school in the morning they have a breakfast of bread with butter or cheese, and coffee, or a bowl of maize and milk beaten up together. When they come back to dinner they get a hunch of bread to begin with, and then potatoes and buttermilk, and a bowl of soup, in which perhaps a small piece of bacon has been boiled—perhaps not. Among the better-off peasantry the dinner is finished with pudding or pancakes. Supper at night is just the same as breakfast in the morning, and on this diet the Swiss children grow up to be rosy, hardy, sturdy youngsters, who will make very strong men and women.

Well, we have dealt with clothing and food; what

of firing ? This may be had in plenty from the woods which clothe the mountain-sides. But no man may cut where he pleases, not even in his own wood. The forest laws of Switzerland are very strict, for a great forest is a natural rampart against the onrush of avalanches from the heights above. So in the autumn the forester marks those trees which can safely be spared, and the woodmen fell them in the winter, when no other work can be done.

The trees are cut into great logs, and when the spring comes and the snows melt, these logs are thrust into the torrents which dash down every slope. Down whirl the logs to the valley below, with its homesteads, and here they are caught and drawn from the stream. Then they are stacked to dry, and before the next winter, axe and saw go to work upon them, and split and cut them into handy-sized pieces with which to stuff the great stove until it roars again through the long dark days of the bitter winter.

IV

ALONG LAKE LEMAN

THE lakes of Switzerland are among the greatest beauties of this beautiful land. Large and small, their number is countless, for everywhere the hills are folded around valleys, and every valley has its stream

and its lake. They vary in size from tiny pools to great sweeps of water, upon which steamboats ply, and whose waters are at times lashed to fierce storms. The largest is the Lake of Geneva ; the most beautiful is the Lake of Lucerne.

The Lake of Geneva—or Lake Leman, as it is sometimes called—does not entirely belong to Switzerland, for part of its shores belongs to France. But the chief towns upon it are Swiss, and Geneva, at its western extremity, is one of the most important cities of Switzerland.

The lake is long and narrow. It is formed by the Rhone, which here fills a valley with its waters before it flows on into France. The water of the lake is deeply, beautifully blue, and the Rhone rushes out from the lake in a sparkling blue torrent. A short distance below Geneva a strange sight may be seen. The River Arve, slow and muddy, flows into the swift blue Rhone. For some distance the rivers run on without mingling—on one side of the channel a swift, clear, blue stream ; on the other, a slow brown current. Lower down they gradually mingle, and the dull Arve muddies the whole river.

A very pleasant excursion from Geneva may be made by the lake steamers, which sail from town to town along the banks of the lake, and make a complete tour of its shores. From the water the scenery is often very fine. Not only do noble hills rise close at hand, but afar off is seen Mont Blanc, the " monarch of mountains," surrounded by a court of white-crowned peaks, only a little less splendid than himself.

Switzerland

The best time to see Lake Leman is in the spring. Its shores are warm and sunny, sheltered by the hills from the cold winds of the season, and affording delightful views of the snow-capped ranges of the Bernese Oberland to the east, and the Mont Blanc range to the south.

It is an admirable place for one who wishes to watch the wonderful pageant of the coming of spring in Switzerland. While no great heights are near at hand, yet it is easy to reach the uplands, the broad alp meadows, where the spring blooms are loveliest. For those who are unable to climb the few thousand feet to the alp pastures there are railways which twist and turn their way up the steepest of slopes, the little engine puffing and panting, and climbing height after height, until a splendid prospect is stretched before the carriage windows, and you put out your head and see a town straight below you, the houses looking smaller than dolls' houses, a river appearing as a tiny silver thread, a railway-train crawling along like a caterpillar.

The train will drop you at the very edge of the snow-line. All the winter the alp has been covered deeply with snow. Now spring has come, and the snow-line is retreating steadily upwards. Day by day the mountain-side shows a wider and a wider band of green meadow or dark pine-wood. Every torrent is full; every hollow and gully is a little torrent, all a-swirl with the melting snow.

But the marvel of the scene is the flowers. They burst at the very edge of the snow. No sooner is the

white mantle of winter withdrawn than the flowers spring with magical swiftness through the carpet of soft green grass, and deck the alp with the deepest, richest colours. Blue, red, white, yellow, brown shading away to black, the flowers are of every tint, and each tint seems purer and more dazzling at these heights than in the gardens by the lake below. The queen of them all is the Alpine rose, a splendid flower, whose rosy glow is striking, whether it grows singly, nodding from some cranny in the rock, or forms a rich carpet of lovely bloom over a wide sweep of alp, or is mingled with its many-coloured companions of spring.

At the eastern end of Lake Leman stands the famous Castle of Chillon, visited by every tourist. Byron's fine poem "The Prisoner of Chillon" is beautiful, but it is not historically true. He represents a patriot, Bonivard, chained to a pillar in his dungeon, and walking to and fro until the prints of his feet were worn into the stones. It is true that Bonivard was here imprisoned from 1530 to 1536, four years of which time he was shut up underground, but his career does not fit with the story of the poem. But the castle is well worth seeing; it is very ancient, and stands in a striking and beautiful position beside the lake, and backed by splendid mountains.

Switzerland

V

THE LAKE OF THE FOUR CANTONS

THE beautiful Lake of Lucerne is also known as the Lake of the Four Cantons. It is so called because around it lie the four cantons which joined together and made a beginning of the republic of Switzerland. But of them we shall speak again. The lake itself is of very irregular shape, with many bays and long arms reaching into the land. Its shores are wonderfully picturesque, and may be seen to great advantage from the deck of one of the many steamers which ply along the lake. As the boat glides along, the scene changes at every moment. At one point bare rocky slopes spring straight from the water's edge; at another the hills slope easily down to the shining lake, and are covered with vineyards and pretty little châlets, and dotted with villages. And in the distance rise snow-clad peaks, while the well-known heights of Rigi and Pilatus overlook the scene.

The Rigi is one of the best-known mountains in Switzerland. It is not famous for its height—it is only a few thousand feet—but from the top a fine view of the great peaks may be gained, and the top is easily reached by a railway; so that great numbers of the tourists who stream through Lucerne all the summer go up the Rigi. The other height of Lucerne, Mount Pilatus, is jagged and broken, more like a true mountain, and not so easy of access on foot,

though few people climb these hills since railways were built up them.

An old legend says that the name "Pilatus" was given to the mountain from Pontius Pilate, the judge who condemned Christ. Pilate's spirit, wandering over the earth in sorrow and distress, sought refuge in a lake at the summit of the height. There, upon a certain day in every year it might have been seen, gloomily brooding over the tragedy which it had witnessed. But a scholar once boldly climbed the mountain and talked with the spirit, and gave it rest. Since then Pilate has been seen no more. But for hundreds of years no Swiss would willingly venture near the lake, for it was believed that he who saw the spirit would be sure to meet with dreadful misfortune.

Pilatus is the "weather mountain" of Lucerne. If his head is clear, fine weather may be looked for; but if he wears his "cap" of cloud, it means rain.

The town of Lucerne itself is a very pretty, cheerful little place, very busy and bustling all the summer, for it is the chief tourist centre of Switzerland. Its quays form a delightful resort. They are long and spacious, and people stroll to and fro watching the lake and the boats, or purchasing trifles at the stalls and shops which line the sides. Evening is a very pleasant time, above all, when the moon shines upon the scene, and boats, decked with lanterns, flit across the smooth water like fireflies darting to and fro, and the music sounds; and beyond the bustle of the laughing throng, gathered from every corner of Europe, the

lake stretches away to wash the feet of distant hills which rise majestic in the moonlight.

Lucerne is divided into Old and New. Old Lucerne is clustered about the River Reuss, whose swift green stream rushes under ancient bridges adorned with curious old paintings. Watch-towers, five hundred years old, stand upon the walls of the old town, and remind one of the days when the citizens had to keep watch against foes who planned their destruction. Some of the old houses are very picturesque. They are adorned with quaint balconies and fine scrolls of ironwork and paintings in fresco. Some of these paintings are of great size and interest. They cover the side of a house with elaborate designs referring to the history or origin of their owner, and embellished with portraits from the life.

The finest monument in Lucerne is the famous "Lion," which every visitor goes to see. In the living rock there is cut out a noble figure of a dying lion, designed by Thorwaldsen, the sculptor. It commemorates the death of the Swiss Guards, slain at the time of the French Revolution. It was the custom of the monarchs of France to maintain a bodyguard of Swiss, and when the palace of the Tuileries at Paris was attacked on the 10th of August, 1792, the Swiss fell fighting bravely in defence of the king whom they served.

Near at hand is the "Glacier Garden," where a series of potholes or "glacier mills" can be seen—holes which have been worn out by the whirl of stones driven by the action of water.

The Lake of the Four Cantons

The neighbourhood of Lucerne is full of historical interest, as well as wonderful beauty. It is the centre of Swiss romance and story. Upon its shores gathered the men who made Switzerland free, who threw off the yoke of Austria, and defied the Austrian chivalry. The name of Tell dominates all others, and from Lucerne the visitor is carried either by rail or steamer to the farthest end of the lake to see Tellsplatte and the chapel built there, and Altdorf, where it is said that Tell shot the apple from his son's head. But the city of Lucerne has a hero of her own—a boyish hero—and we will read of him after we have dealt with the story of Tell.

STORIES OF THE BRAVE OLD SWISS

VI

THE STORY OF WILLIAM TELL

THE Lake of Lucerne, as we have said, has not only a great name in the story of the beauties of Switzerland, but it has even a greater in the story of Swiss history; for on its shores lie the Forest Cantons, the divisions which saw the beginnings of the Swiss Republic.

About six hundred years ago the Swiss were in subjection to the rulers of Austria. They were treated so

harshly by their Austrian masters that at length the Swiss resolved to throw off the Austrian yoke, and it is said that William Tell was among those who first struck a blow for freedom.

Every Swiss child knows the story of William Tell, and he is the great hero of Swiss legend. One day an Austrian Governor named Gessler, a cruel and wicked tyrant, set up a pole in the market-place of Altdorf, a small town near the lake. Upon this pole he set his hat, and gave orders that every Swiss who passed should bow down before it, and thus do homage to his Austrian masters.

Tell came by and did not bow. He walked proudly on, and refused to take notice of this insolent order. Gessler was full of wrath, and ordered him to be seized and bound.

Now, Gessler knew that Tell was a very famous archer. It was said that Tell's arrow never missed the mark. So the Governor bade his soldiers seize Tell's son and set the boy against a tree. An apple was placed on the child's head, and Tell was bidden to shoot at that tiny mark. If he should refuse to do this, he was to be put to death at once.

Tell knew not what to do, for he feared that he might shoot his child. But at length he took two arrows, placed one on his bow-string, and took careful aim. He shot the arrow, and it cleft the apple in two, and both he and his child were safe. Then Gessler demanded of the great archer that he should say why he had taken two arrows. At first Tell refused to give any reason; but when Gessler promised

that his life should be spared whatever the answer might be, Tell at once said: "If the first arrow had injured my son, the second would soon have pierced thy heart."

Gessler was full of fury when he heard this bold reply. "I have promised thee thy life, Tell," he said, "but thou shalt spend it in utter darkness, in a dungeon, where neither sun nor moon can shine upon thee."

Tell was bound and placed in the Governor's barge, and the boat was rowed across the lake. When the barge was far from the shore, one of those sudden storms which sweep down from the hills lashed the waves of the lake to fury. The crew of the boat became in danger of their lives, and they called upon the Governor to allow Tell to steer, or all must be lost. They knew that Tell was the most expert boatman of them all.

Gessler ordered that Tell should be unbound, and the hero took the tiller and steered the boat through the storm to safety. He guided the barge to a certain spot where a broad flat rock forms a natural landing-place. Here he ran the boat ashore, at the rock which is called Tellsplatte to this day.

Crash went the boat against the rock, and Tell, seizing his bow and arrows, made one leap to land, and was off and away. He escaped, but he bethought himself that he was not in safety so long as Gessler lived to pursue him; so he turned to a thicket beside a "hollow way," through which Gessler must ride to gain his castle.

At last Tell heard the tramp of horses, and he looked out from his hiding-place and saw Gessler riding towards the spot where he lay among the bushes. The arrow was ready on the bow-string, and as the Governor was riding past, the shaft was loosed and sent through Gessler's heart. The Governor felt certain who it was that had dealt this fatal stroke. His last words were, "This is Tell's shaft." And so, with the death of the Austrian tyrant, the first great blow was struck on behalf of Swiss liberty.

VII

THREE FAMOUS BATTLES

THERE are people who doubt the story of William Tell and Gessler, the Swiss archer and the Austrian tyrant; but no one can doubt the great and glorious victory won at Morgarten by the Swiss on the 15th of November, 1315. Three cantons beside the lake—Schwyz, Uri, and Unterwalden: the three Forest Cantons, as they were called, because of their great woods—were resolved to be free of Austrian rule. The Austrian Duke determined to crush them once and for all.

He regarded it as a very easy matter. He had vast numbers of horsemen and footmen, all splendidly armed and well trained in warfare; his opponents were

a few peasants, who clung to their native hills, and loved freedom, and were ready to die for it. The Austrians looked upon the affair as a mere hunting excursion. They provided themselves with cart-loads of ropes to lead back prisoners and the herds of cattle they expected to seize.

When the men of the forest heard that their enemies were marching upon them, they gathered to defend their rights as freemen. They mustered thirteen hundred fighting men, armed with the rudest of weapons, many having nothing in their hands save heavy clubs, spiked with iron. But before night fell those spiked clubs had been dipped in the best blood of Austria.

Twenty-four thousand of the Duke's finest troops, led by his brother Leopold, advanced against these shepherds and herdsmen, and the two armies met on the slopes of Morgarten. At this point a narrow pass ascends the hill-side; upon one side of the pass lies the mountain, upon the other the deep waters of the lake. At the head of the pass stood the small band of Swiss, calmly surveying the splendid host of steel-clad knights and men-at-arms which rode against them. The Austrians pushed up the slope confident of victory.

But as the latter rode up the pass an avalanche was loosed upon them—not an avalanche of snow, but one prepared by the Swiss themselves. Great stones, rocks, and trunks of trees had been poised on the edge of the heights above the pass. When the Austrians were seen below, these were thrust over the brink of the descent, and came rolling, leaping, thundering

down the mountain-side, and crashing in among the horsemen. Many were struck down, and the horses became so terrified that the whole body of the assailants was thrown into utter confusion.

Here was the opportunity of the Swiss, and they did not let it slip. Down the pass they swept upon the bewildered foe, and assailed them furiously with their swords, their halberds (a heavy shaft of wood fitted with axe and spear-point), and with their great iron-spiked clubs.

The Austrians tried to turn back and escape. In vain. They were caught in the narrow pass as in a net. Many sprang from their horses and tried to get away on foot; but they slipped on the rocks, and the nimble mountaineers, whose nailed shoes gave them good foothold on their native slopes, caught and destroyed them easily.

It was hardly a battle: it was a mere slaughter. Great numbers of the Austrians were slain on the spot; many were driven into the lake and drowned; the rest fled. Among the latter was Duke Leopold, who himself narrowly escaped with his life. One who saw him on his flight from this fatal field said that he looked "like death, and quite distracted." Well might he look distracted. He had left behind him a battle-ground drenched with the best blood of Austria; while of the brave Swiss only fourteen men had fallen.

The latter could scarce believe at first that they had won so mighty a victory; but when they saw the Austrians flying for their lives, and knew that the day was indeed their own, they fell on their knees upon



VILLAGE OF ALTDORF WHERE WILLIAM TELL SHOT THE APPLE. *Page 19.*

this for ever famous field of Morgarten, and thanked God for deliverance from the power of Austria; and to this day a service of thanksgiving is held every year on the anniversary of that great fight. Year by year Swiss men and women visit that sacred spot where the liberty of their land was won in one of the decisive battles of the world, for after Morgarten the Forest Cantons never lost their freedom again.

VIII

THE LITTLE HERO OF LUCERNE

AFTER the Forest Cantons had won their freedom, the people of Lucerne began to long that they also might be free from the rule of Austria. At last they joined their neighbours, and became the fourth free canton around the lake.

The Austrians were very angry when they saw the town slip out of their grasp, and they began at once to make plans to seize it again. The Austrians were led by the Bailiff of Rothenbourg, the man whom the Duke of Austria had appointed to rule the district in which Lucerne stood.

One warm summer night, more than five hundred years ago, a boy named Peter had gone to bathe in the lake. After he had dressed himself again, he lay down on the bank and fell asleep. He was awakened

by the sound of footsteps on the ground, and he saw five or six men creeping softly along the shore.

The boy did not like the look of these men, or their movements : they crept along like robbers. He made up his mind that he would follow them, and warn the guards that were watching the town. Just as he was about to get up, a fresh band of men approached, and passed him. Their leader was a man in a coat of mail, with a battle-axe hanging at his girdle, and the boy knew him : it was the Bailiff of Rothenbourg, the enemy of Lucerne. As they went by, the men were speaking together in low voices, but the boy caught enough of what they said to be sure that danger threatened his native town.

When the Bailiff and his men had passed, Peter sprang to his feet and followed them, keeping himself hidden behind great stones and tufts of grass. Soon they were quite near to the town. Only a strip of sand and a bed of reeds lay between the water and the houses. But now Peter lost all track of those whom he was following. Whither had they gone ? They seemed to have vanished from the earth. Had they crept into the town by some secret track, known only to themselves ?

He looked and listened ; but he saw nothing in the darkness, and heard nothing, save the lapping of the waves on the shore. Then suddenly, in the blackness, he saw a faint light at a short distance from him. He threw himself again on the sand and crawled towards it. He found himself at the mouth of a cave, like a great dark tunnel running into the rock, and he knew

at once where he was. This cave ran under the town, and at its farther end it was used as a cellar. There was a trap-door in its roof and a ladder leading up to it. The trap-door opened into a stable, and gave the enemy a secret way into the heart of the town. It was a traitor who had laid this way open to them, a man who had gone over to the side of the Austrians, after pretending to be heart and soul with the Swiss. The traitor was with the Austrian band at this very moment. His name was Jean de Malters.

Peter crept into the cave. He could hear some one speaking, and at the next moment he knew that it was the voice of Jean de Malters. The traitor was giving directions to the enemies of Lucerne, and Peter went nearer and nearer to discover what shape their plans would take. He heard death threatened to his friends, and knew that Lucerne would see a massacre before the morning unless he could warn his father and the townsmen.

Suddenly Peter's heart jumped into his mouth. Some one was coming into the cave behind him. He turned to fly, but it was too late. He had been seen, and a strong hand seized him and dragged him forward into the light of the lantern round which the band had gathered.

"A spy! a spy!" cried the man who had caught him. The Austrians laid their hands on their swords to cut the spy into a thousand pieces, but when they saw it was only a child they paused. But Jean de Malters sprang forward in terrible anger.

"How did you come here?" he cried.

"I was sleeping on the bank of the lake," replied Peter, "and you wakened me by your footsteps, and I followed here."

"I do not believe that," cried the traitor roughly. "Some one sent you here to watch us. Who sent you?"

"No one," replied Peter; "I have told you the truth."

"You are not telling the truth," cried Jean de Malters. "Tell me who set you to watch us!" He took the child by his shoulders and forced him to his knees. "Now," said the man, "I give you two minutes to make up your mind. Tell us, or you shall die."

Two minutes passed, but Peter had not spoken. He thought of his mother and father, and the danger which hung over his home, but he was quite silent.

"He must die," said Jean de Malters.

But now some of the band spoke out against this.

"No, no," they said; "a child's blood is innocent blood. No good will come to our enterprise if we begin by shedding that. Make him swear that he will never reveal what he has seen or heard 'to any living soul,' and let him go."

In the end this was done, and Peter was made to take a most solemn oath that he would not repeat "to any living soul" what he had seen and heard that night.

As soon as he was free, Peter ran to the town as fast as he could put his feet to the ground. He came to the hall where his father and others were gathered

talking over the affairs of the town. At the door he paused, for he knew not what to do. He must do something, or the hidden men-at-arms would enter the town after the citizens had gone to their rest, and slay all those who loved freedom. The hour fixed for the attack was that of midnight.

Suddenly an idea flashed into the boy's head, and he acted upon it. Peter went into the hall and walked straight up to a huge porcelain stove that stood in the midst of the great room.

"O stove," said Peter, "I have seen and heard to-night very strange and dreadful things, which I may not tell to any living soul. But I will tell you, O stove."

The men in the hall were full of surprise when they saw the child come in and go up to the stove. They were more puzzled still when they heard him begin to talk to the stove, and they thought he had gone crazy. But when they heard what he had to say, their minds changed. They felt certain that he spoke the truth, and they flew to arms at once.

Midnight struck, and the Austrians made their assault. They found, not a sleeping town, but a strong band of well-armed patriots waiting for them. The struggle was fierce, and many fell that night in the streets of Lucerne. The battle ended in the complete defeat of the Austrians and the victory of the patriots. Never again was an Austrian foot set in Lucerne as the foot of a master. The city was free for ever, and a child had saved it.

Switzerland

IX

THE MEN OF SOLEURE : ARNOLD OF WINKELRIED

LONG after the Forest Cantons freed themselves, there was still much fighting between the Swiss and the Austrians. The Dukes of Austria never forgot how the Swiss had thrown off their rule, and were always ready to attack a Swiss city or canton in order to punish these sturdy burghers or peasants who loved freedom above all things.

Here is a story of the old city of Soleure—a story which shows the noble spirit in which the Swiss fought their battles for independence. Duke Leopold laid siege to the city of Soleure, on the River Aar, and thought that it would soon be his own, for he held the son of the commandant as prisoner. Leopold tried to frighten the Governor by saying that his son should be put to death if he would not give up the town. But neither father nor son were moved by the threat, and the siege went on.

Next, Leopold built a bridge across the river above the town. Upon this bridge he stationed a strong body of troops, in order to prevent food being carried into the town. His plan was to starve the garrison out.

But this bridge was not built very strongly, and one day, when a great number of Austrian soldiers were upon it, the timbers gave way, and the men were flung into the river. Did the men of Soleure rejoice when they saw their enemies helpless and drowning in the

swift stream ? No ; they leapt into the river and drew the struggling Austrians to the bank. They forgot that these men were foes ; they only saw fellow human beings in peril. They took the men they had rescued into the town, gave them food and wine, and then sent them back to their own camp, without asking a penny of ransom.

Duke Leopold was so filled with admiration of this brave and noble conduct that he came to the gates of the city, attended only by thirty knights, and asked to be admitted as a friend. He presented the town with a banner, made a treaty of peace with it, and marched his army away. Thus was the siege raised, and Soleure was saved.

Another very famous battle was that of Sempach, in 1386, where Arnold of Winkelried made for himself a great name in Swiss song and story. Again a Duke Leopold of Austria marched to chastise the Swiss, and threatened the town of Zürich. He was at the head of a picked body of troops, knights clad in armour, and bearing long spears. A small body of Swiss—a mere handful in face of the strong Austrian army—marched to meet Leopold, and faced him on the field of Sempach.

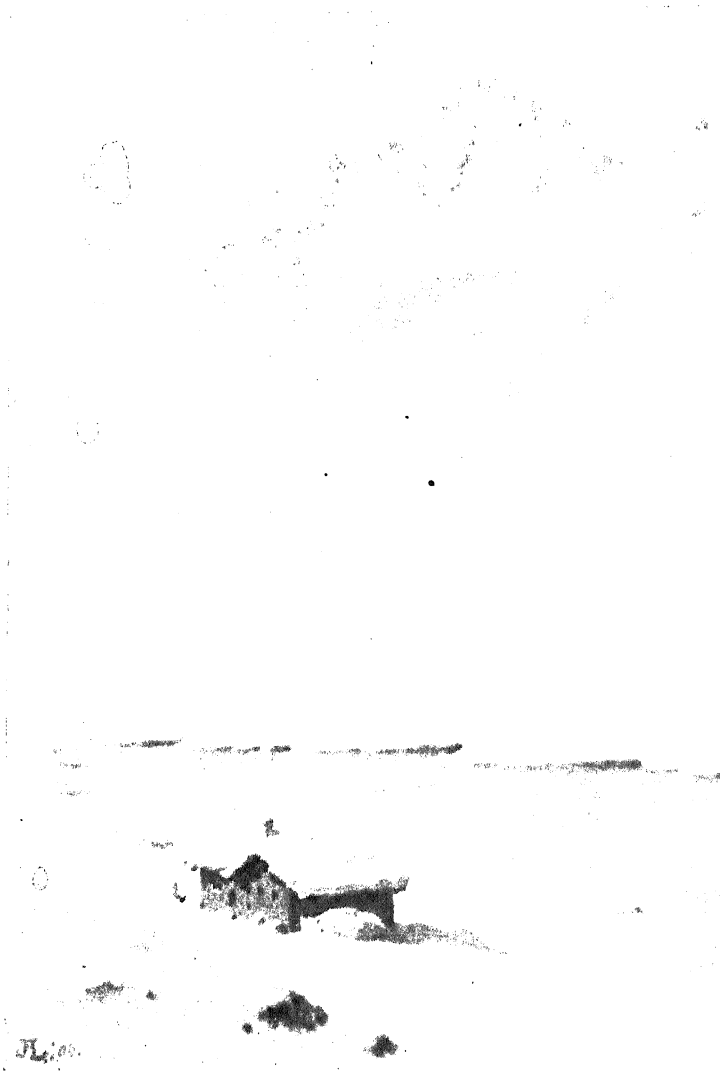
On the day of battle the Austrian knights dismounted, and left their horses in the rear. Perhaps they remembered Morgarten, and felt that it was safer to fight on foot. But now they were rendered awkward by the long toes or beaks on their shoes, for it was the fashion then to wear such things. So they cut them off at a place still called the " beak-meadows," and went forward to the fight.

Shoulder to shoulder they rushed on in a solid steel-clad mass, their long spears held before them, and hurled themselves upon the Swiss. At first the fight went badly for the brave mountaineers; sixty of them were slain before a single Austrian fell. They could not pass the bristling hedge of spears which guarded the front rank of the enemy.

Then out leapt the noble Arnold of Winkelried. "I'll make a way for you, comrades," he cried; "take care of my wife and children!" He sprang upon the enemy with arms widely outspread, and gathered into his body the points of all the spears within his reach. Thus a gap was formed in the line, and into this gap leapt the quick-footed Swiss, and came to close quarters with their foes.

Now the advantage was with them, and they plied sword and iron-spiked club with terrible power. The gap widened swiftly, and the Austrians fell fast. Leopold himself, fighting in the front line, was slain, and the Swiss won another great victory, and Arnold of Winkelried an immortal name.

"'Make way for liberty!' he cried,
'Make way for liberty!' and died."



THE HOME OF THE AVALANCHE.

The Avalanche

X

THE AVALANCHE—I

THERE are many dangers among the Swiss Alps in winter, such as sudden snow-storms, which overwhelm the mountaineer, or hide the lips of yawning precipices over which he may fall; but the greatest danger of all is the dreaded avalanche—the sliding down the mountain-side of a huge mass of snow.

Sometimes the avalanche will luckily slip into an empty valley, and there will lie till the spring sun melts it; but sometimes it sweeps across mountain-paths and populated slopes, destroying, perhaps a single life, perhaps a whole village, and inflicting immense damage upon property.

One winter will vary very much from another with regard to the number of avalanches which fall. Avalanches are always very numerous in a winter when the early snowfall is slight and the later snowfall is heavy. The reason is this: On the upper slopes the thin snowfall of early winter is exposed to the sun by day, and also to the effect of intense frost. Thus a smooth, hard, icy coating is formed on the steep heights.

When a heavy snowfall comes, it may well be that a depth of 5 or 6 feet of new snow will gather on the old; but the new snow can get no grip on the polished surface of the old, and it slips away by its own weight. It then breaks loose in immense masses,

and, gathering speed as it goes, rushes down the mountain-side with terrific power, sweeping away all before it.

Avalanches are not all of the same kind, and the mountaineer divides them into several classes. There is the dust avalanche—a very dreaded form of these thunderbolts of winter. The dust avalanche is composed of loose, new-fallen snow, torn from its position by a furious whirlwind. The blast lifts the snow from a whole mountain-side, and drives it onward with incredible force, beating down all obstacles, and sweeping away trees, dwellings, man, and beast, in its irresistible rush. The snow is fine and hard, and when it comes to rest it sets like marble round every object which it has carried away.

"A human victim of the dreadful thing, who was so lucky as to be saved from its clutch, once described to me the sensations he experienced. He was caught at the edge of the avalanche, just when it was settling down to rest, carried off his feet, and rendered helpless by the swathing snow, which tied his legs, pinned his arms to his ribs, and crawled upward to his throat. There it stopped. His head emerged, and he could breathe; but as the mass set, he felt the impossibility of expanding his lungs, and knew that he must die of suffocation. At the point of losing consciousness, he became aware of comrades running to his rescue. They hacked the snow away around his throat, and then rushed on to dig for another man who had been buried in the same disaster, leaving him able to breathe, but wholly powerless to stir hand or foot."

Another form is the stroke avalanche, and this is the main kind—the avalanche which is formed by a great mass of snow breaking loose, and sliding down the mountain. Everything that lies in its track is gathered into the bosom of this onrushing field of snow. It passes over a forest, and when it has gone on, a few broken stumps show where the great stately pines once grew; the trees themselves are adding weight and force to the rush of the avalanche. It sweeps across a road, and walls and telegraph-posts disappear. It sweeps across a village, and that village is no more. Finally, the avalanche, with its freight of death and destruction, thunders into some valley and fills it from ridge to ridge, or rolls out on the level in large billowing waves of snow.

Sometimes these sliding avalanches carry away vast masses of earth and boulders, and then, instead of being white and beautiful, they are dirty and ugly, stained by earth and stones, the trees in their clutch splintered and torn by tearing, and crushing, and grinding among huge boulders. This is the ground avalanche.

These sliding avalanches are not so swift as the avalanche that comes down on the wings of the whirlwind. Thus it is possible that people may be warned of their danger by the roar of the falling mass, and by flying from their homes, save their lives, if not their property.

On one occasion the people of a village standing on one slope of a valley saw an avalanche about to descend upon a village directly opposite. They rushed

to their church and rang the bells wildly. Their neighbours heard the peal clang across the depths of the valley, and ran from their houses. At once the people in danger caught the roar of the huge snow mass sweeping upon them, and fled for their lives. The avalanche leapt upon the village and struck against the strong, solid walls of the church. These were dashed to pieces, yet they availed somewhat to check the rush of the field of snow, and the avalanche surged into the village and came to rest.

"Houses were buried and partly shattered. On reckoning their numbers the escaped villagers perceived that four persons were missing—three women and an old man of eighty. One woman was discovered alive behind the stove of her shattered kitchen. A second was buried in a stable, and got out alive. A third had also taken refuge in a stable, whence she was dug out. The old man remained in bed, with the snow piled high above his roof. He wondered that the night lasted so long, and was astonished when the rescue party came and hauled him through a window out upon a tunnel they had excavated to his dwelling."

But all villages are not so fortunate as this. Sometimes the avalanche descends at night, or without warning, and many lives are lost, the bodies being at times recovered months later, when the huge drift melts in the spring sunshine.

Besides these great avalanches there is a small one, which often happens wherever there is a steep slope of snow, and it is called the snow-slip. A small mass of snow starts to slide gently down a slope, and,

as it goes, it opens out like a fan, sweeping forward till it settles on the level. It is a small affair, but very dangerous. As it goes it rises, and, meeting a man in its path, it catches his legs, lifts him off his feet, and sweeps him along. If he cannot keep his head above the surface he is often a dead man before he can be dug out of the snow, which settles at the foot of the slope. So small a mass is required to produce a snow-slip that one proverb runs, "A pan of snow may kill a man."

When a great avalanche settles, its immense weight packs the snow wonderfully hard. At times a post-road is buried to the depth, perhaps, of 50 or 60 feet, and it becomes necessary to cut a tunnel through the huge drift in order that sledges may pass and traffic be maintained. This work is a matter of pickaxe and spade, and there is little fear of the walls of the tunnel falling in.

It is almost like hewing a way through stone. It is quite impossible to make any impression with the fingers on the packed snow, and the marks of the picks are as sharp and clear as the strokes of a chisel on marble. The work is very hard, for snow is only one of the things to be cut away. There are huge trunks of trees to be sawn through and massive blocks of ice to be cut across, and great boulders to be removed.

XI

THE AVALANCHE—II

MANY wonderful stories are told of escapes from death when the avalanche thunders down from the height —not merely stories of people who have fled just in time, but of people actually buried in an avalanche, yet not killed by it. A young man was passing along a mountain road, when he looked up and saw an avalanche rushing upon him. He sprang for shelter under a great stone, and across this stone fell a large tree. The snow swept over him and settled at the spot, shutting him up in the little hollow between the tree and the stone. His friends searched for him, and after digging for one hundred and three hours they found him. He was unable to speak; he was terribly frost-bitten, but he was still alive.

Here is a still stranger story of a rescue from the snow death. A man was once at a good distance from his native village when he was caught in a snow-slip. He was dug out from the drift, but all believed that he was dead, and his body was set aside for burial. Soon after a man from the same village came to the place, and the people asked him to take the body of his dead comrade home.

The man was a rough and churlish fellow, and he conveyed the body, not on his sledge, but at the tail of it. He lashed a rope around the ankles of the frozen body, fastened the rope to his sledge, and trotted away,

the body gliding smoothly behind over the snow. Half-way home the darkness fell, and the sledge-driver paused at a village inn, intending to pass the night there. He went to untie the rope, thinking to stow the body of his neighbour away in the stable, when, to his surprise, the supposed dead man was moving!

The latter was at once unfastened from the rope and carried into a warm room, where he soon recovered, and he lived for many a year to tell the tale. He owed his life entirely to the rude fashion in which his body had been treated. Had his neighbour been a kind-hearted fellow, carrying the body carefully on the sledge, the death torpor would never have been broken. But the swift passage of the body over the snow had acted as chafing and friction, and set the blood once more running through the veins, and brought life back to the frozen frame.

A story told by many a Swiss fireside relates the sufferings of a mother and her children once buried in a lonely wooden châlet. An avalanche had swallowed up their home, and the snow was high above the roof. They did their utmost to dig a way out, but every effort was in vain. At last they had eaten every morsel of food in the house, and starvation stared them in the face. In this terrible position the mother decided that one of them must be sacrificed to save the lives of the rest.

She gathered her children round her in prayer, and then lots were drawn. The fatal lot fell upon a little girl. The brave little creature knelt down and declared that she was quite willing to give up

her life for the benefit of the others. But just at that moment a loud noise was heard in the chimney, and a chamois came falling down upon the broad hearth. They were saved. Not only did the animal give them an immediate supply of food, but they were enabled to escape by climbing the chimney, and following the way which it had made in the snow.

Here is another wonderful escape, this time from a danger of the avalanche which has not yet been mentioned. This danger is the terrific wind or blast which the avalanche sends before it. This blast is so strong that at times it will send men, horses, sledges, whirling through the air as the wind blows dead leaves in an autumn gale. One day a woman was walking to church alone, her friends having gone on a little earlier. She was caught in the blast of an avalanche, swept into the air, and landed among the top branches of a lofty pine. She clung to the boughs, and the avalanche passed and left the pine standing. When her friends returned from church, they saw her clinging for bare life to the top of the tree, and she was got down in safety.

Another case was that of a carter driving a sledge and two horses along a pass. An avalanche fell on the opposite side of the gorge. It could not reach him, but the blast did, and swept him, his sledge and horses, off the road into a bed of deep soft snow, from which it was no easy task to get out.

But all who stand in the way of an avalanche blast are not so lucky as these. A few years ago a man was driving his horse and sledge along an Alpine road when

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an avalanche caught him. "An eye-witness saw him carried by the blast, together with his horse and sledge, 200 yards in the air across a mountain stream. The snow which followed buried him. He was subsequently dug out dead, with his horse—dead—and his sledge beside him. The harness had been blown to ribbons in the air, for nothing could be found of it except the head-piece on the horse's neck."

XII

A DRIVE OVER A SWISS PASS IN WINTER*

THE snow-tracks which cross the higher passes are very narrow, and for this reason little low, open sledges, drawn by one horse, are commonly employed. The sledge is a box, shaped somewhat like a car in a merry-go-round, into which a pair of travellers are shut by means of a wooden frame or lid moving up and down on hinges. This lid rises to the breast of a seated person, and protects his legs from falling snow. The upper part of his body is exposed. When the sledge upsets—which is not unfrequently the case—the whole falls quietly upon one side and discharges its contents. The wooden frame or lid, being movable upon its hinges, enables a man to disengage himself without difficulty.

* Adapted from "Our Life in the Swiss Highlands," by John Addington Symonds (Messrs. A. and C. Black).

The driver stands upon a ledge behind, passing the reins between the shoulders of the passengers. There are no springs to the vehicle, which bumps and thumps solidly in the troughs of the road. These sledges carry no luggage. A second horse is used, who follows close behind and draws a truck on runners laden with all kinds of baggage. He has no driver, and the result is that these luggage sledges frequently upset. It is always safest to travel with the post in winter, because the horses know each yard of the road from one stage to another.

In the winter of 1887–1888 I left Davos with one of my daughters for Italy. We set off at 6 a.m., under a clear, frosty sky, upon the 5th of April. Owing to constant traffic, the snow-road was broken into deep ruts and holes, which made our sledges leap, jump, bump, buck, lurch, and thud in ways quite indescribable to those who have not experienced the process. The luggage-sledge behind upset three times in the course of the first five miles. At one point of the way an avalanche had fallen two hours earlier. It had carried away the road and parapets, depositing a sharply-inclined slope of snow and dirty debris in their place. This we clambered over as well as we could on foot. The horses, helped by their brawny drivers, had great difficulty in dragging the sledges across its uneven, treacherous slope, which extended in a straight line to the stream bed, twenty yards below.

At Mühlen, as the day was drawing to its close, I doubted whether it was prudent to fore forward in the whirling snow. But there is fascination in com-

pleting journeys once begun; besides, we wished to cross the Julier Pass before the snow could mound us up and stop our going. So we called fresh horses and went forth into the twilight. The evening slowly dwindled, while we jolted, lunging and lurching, along the troughed and deeply-cloven road to Stalla. Imagination quails before those bumps and jumps. They threw the horse upon his knees, ourselves upon our faces in the sledge, and the driver from his stand behind it.

At Stalla there was the opportunity again of resting for the night. But the same impulse swayed us now as before at Mühlen. Our spirits rose, while the sleet fell thickly and the wind wailed grimly, at the thought of threading those mysterious snow-ways of the pass in darkness. Onward, then, we drove, silencing the postilion, who more than recommended the wisdom of a halt. Night closed round, and up we travelled or two hours at a foot's pace, turning corners which we could not see or feel, exploring trackless wastes of drifts, with stinging snow-shafts on our faces.

The hospice was reached at last, and here we had a third chance of suspending our journey and resting for the night. Imagine a hut of rough-hewn stone, crowded with burly carters swarming out to greet us by the light of one dim lantern. Over the roof of the hovel surged the mounded snow, and curved itself in billowy lines of beauty above those granite eaves. The carters emerged from a cellar, as it seemed, climbing up six feet of snow by steps cut out to reach the level of the road. As they stood in the doorway, stalwart fellows clad in shaggy serge, like bears, the snow-

wreaths curling from the rafters touched their hairy heads.

I had no adverse mind to staying there and fraternizing with these comrades through a winter's night. Nor did I fear for my daughter's comfort. I knew that she would be well; our beds, though cold, would certainly be dry. Winter on the tops of mountains has this merit—that damp can find no place there. And the hearts of mountaineers, beneath their husks of roughness, are the hearts of gentlemen. But the impulse to fare forward, the more practical fear that we might be snowed up for days in this frost-bound "cave of care," bade us order out fresh horses.

I liked the new postilion. I did not fancy the horse which was harnessed to our sledge. He was a tall, lean chestnut; and chestnuts, as I know by experience, are apt to feel impatient if they get embarrassed in deep snow. As the sequel proved, I made a false shot; for this chestnut showed himself up to every trick and turning in the road we had to follow. Another horse was yoked to the luggage-sledge behind us, then left to do as best he could without a driver—such is the custom on these mountains. He did his best by following the beast in front. I cared little about luggage at that moment; what I wanted was to arrive at Silvaplana safely with my daughter.

The descent from the hospice was grimly solemn and impressive. Passing from the friendly light of that one stable-lantern, we now entered the dim obscurity of dreamland—a mist of whirling snowflakes, driven onward by the wind, which grew in violence.

Here and there we could perceive the tops of black stakes and telegraph-posts emerging from the undulating drift. Here and there for considerable intervals they were completely hidden. As these posts average thirty feet in height, some conception of the snow-depth may be formed. The track was obliterated, buried in fresh-fallen snow and storm-drift.

The winter road upon the Julier plunges straight downward, cutting across the windings of the summer post-road, which lies, with all its bridges, barricades, and parapets, five fathoms deep below. At one spot, where absolutely nothing appeared to indicate the existence of a track, the postilion muttered in our ears: "Now we must trust to the horse; if he misses it is all over with us." The reins were laid upon the chestnut's shoulders, and he succeeded in feeling, scenting out the way. Pausing, sounding at each step with his fore-feet, putting his nose down to smell, sometimes hardly stirring, sometimes breaking into a trot for a few seconds, then coming to a sudden halt again, then moving cautiously, as though in doubt, he went with interruptions forward.

The sledge-bells had been left behind at the hospice for fear of avalanches; their tinkling or the crack of a whip suffices in such weather to dislodge a snow-slip. The other horse with the baggage sledge followed behind, attending eagerly to every movement of his comrade. And so we passed silently downward into the gulf of utter gloom, without making the least sound. The only noise we heard was the shrieking of the wind, and a horrible music from the telegraph-

wires close at our ears. We could touch these wires with our fingers when they were not buried in the snow, and they thrilled with a sharp metallic shudder like the voices of banshees. Sometimes we ascended avalanches, and then there was blank vacancy and utter silence—every object huddled in ruin, and the path smoothed out by softly-curving wreaths. Only through changes of movement in the sledge did we know that we were climbing steeply up or plunging perilously down.

On the dizzy top of one of these avalanches, it happened that the clouds above us broke, and far aloft, in a solitary space of sky, the Great Bear swam into sight for a few moments. This little starlight was enough to reveal the desolation of the place, and the yawning chasms on our right and left. I knew by experience how narrow, how high-uplifted, is the thread of pathway in such passages. A false step to this side or to that would plunge us into oceans of soft smothering snow, from which in darkness we could not hope to extricate ourselves.

Yet the two brave horses kept the track. The Great Bear was swallowed up in the mist again. The wind rallied with fierce clutching grasps, while we cautiously descended from the avalanche and resumed what must have been the winter road, although we could not see or feel it. Just then pines began to show their dark masses on the cliffs. Courage! We shall soon be under shelter. But, even as I said these words, the whirlwind scooped the snow again in blinding drifts around us, and the telegraph banshees shrieked with

redoubled spitefulness : " Come away, come away to us ! Come and be buried, as we have been ! The wind that makes us croon our weird song shall wind the snow-wreaths over you !"

That was not to be our destiny, however ; for after jolting through another avalanche, the excavated walls of which touched our sledges on each hand, we made a few sharp turns, saw lights ahead, and came lurching into the little street of Silvaplana opposite the hospitable inn. We had been driving for fourteen hours over every conceivable kind of road—rough, broken, precipitous, trackless—and we were glad enough to get a late supper and a warm bed. In this account of a night passage of the Julier I have not spoken about cold or exposure to weather. Indeed, we did not think about these things, nor did we suffer from them. Of course, we were snowed over, and almost throttled sometimes by the wind. But cold is little felt on mountain passes when the air is dry and the traveller wears proper clothing.

XIII

A CLIMB UP A SWISS MOUNTAIN—I

When climbers attack a Swiss mountain, all is the easiest of plain-sailing on the lower slopes. It is simply a most beautiful walk by winding paths, across broad meadows and through pine-forests, climbing

steadily up until they draw near to the snow-line. Now they begin to prepare for the real work of the journey.

Very often the first ice under their feet is that of a glacier which pushes its broad nose down some mountain valley. What is a glacier? It is a river of ice slowly moving down the mountain. Upon the upper slopes vast fields of snow become packed together, and under the summer sun they do not melt, but become transformed into fields of ice. A huge field of ice will, under pressure of its own weight and the weight of snow above it, begin to move slowly down the mountain, and that is a glacier.

Its movement is very slow, but quite steady, and as it descends into lower regions it melts in the milder air and under the rays of the hot sun. But the whole glacier is not easily disposed of. Pools of water may stud its surface and a river break from its snout, but the huge bulk of the ice still stands, and there are spots where glaciers may be seen thrusting themselves into the belt of cultivation—an ice-field on the one hand, a meadow or corn-field on the other.

The surface of a glacier is full of interest, but curiosity must be accompanied by caution, for there are many dangers to be guarded against. The greatest danger is that of falling into crevasses—openings in the ice, which vary in size from mere cracks to huge yawning chasms of great depth.

These crevasses are formed by the movement of the glacier. As the great ice-river flows slowly over uneven ground, a terrible cracking noise may be



"A GLACIER WHICH PUSHES ITS BROAD NOSE
DOWN SOME MOUNTAIN VALLEY."

heard, often so loud as to resemble thunder. This is the glacier coming downhill, and settling itself into the new shape of its bed. Often it cracks open, and a crevasse appears. With the movement of the glacier the crevasse widens and deepens until it becomes a great abyss with steep sides—a terrible trap for the unwary walker.

But, you may say, no one would be likely to walk into a great hole like that. Of course they would not if they could always see it, but very often they cannot. A snowstorm will cover the glacier with a smooth, even sheet of white, and a thin veil of snow is spread over the yawning mouth of the crevasse. A climber, walking boldly without trying the snow with his staff; would step on to the thin covering of snow, break through it, and go down headlong into the abyss.

Many cases have been known of people falling into crevasses and losing their lives. Sometimes the body has been recovered at once, sometimes not for many years. A case is recorded of a young couple spending their honeymoon in a Swiss village. The young husband went for a mountain-climb, fell into a crevasse, and his body could not be recovered.

The movement of the glacier was measured, and men of science said that more than thirty years must pass before the glacier would give up the body. Time passed, and the bride, now a middle-aged woman, returned to the glacier to await the day when she could recover the body of her long-lost husband. The spring snows melted, and almost to the day that had

been predicted the body was seen. It was in perfect preservation in its icy wrapping, and was recovered and buried. It had been borne slowly down and down, the glacier melting away little by little, until it gave up its prey.

The sides of a crevasse are very beautiful to look upon—above all, when the sun shines into the opening. The ice is of the most lovely tints of blue—delicate and exquisite shades upon which the eye is never tired of gazing; yet if you reach out your stick and break off a piece of this beautifully coloured ice, you find that it owes its shade to its position: you hold in your hand a pale, untinted block of ordinary ice.

If the crevasse be filled with water, the blue is deeper and richer still. At times a crevasse may be found partly roofed over by snow, so that the sun strikes into it by only one or two openings. Then is formed a most lovely fairy grotto, with blue depths and white, shining roof—a delicate and beautiful vision.

The streams which thread the surface of the glacier are of deep interest. You may mark a point where a tiny trickle flows from a little mound of snow. You follow it, and find other trickles of water running in, to meet like the veins on a leaf, and the tiny stream grows. Other streams run in, and soon you are following a torrent streaming down the face of the glacier. And here is a fresh beauty; for the icy bed of the torrent is a deep, rich blue, and transparent as glass, and the sides are of snow, glittering white in the sun, and above the blue and between the white the crystal water dances swiftly along, shining brightly as it goes.

But it is not for long that the clear water will dance in the sunshine. You follow the torrent, and you hear a deep musical booming note a short distance before you. The torrent dashes ahead and—vanishes. You hasten to the place, and find a large round hole into which the water has leapt. It is a *moulin*, or pot-hole—a place where the water has eaten its way down through the glacier to the rocky bed below. Here, beneath the glacier, the torrents meet, and rush downwards until they emerge at the snout, and form a glacier river. But the water is no longer clear. It is filled with the earth the glacier is tearing loose as it moves, and the river dashes down the mountain-side as a muddy stream.

Here and there may be seen " glacier-tables "—large flat blocks of stone or slate standing high above the glacier-bed, like tables set on legs of ice. They are formed in this manner : A great block of granite falls on the glacier, and keeps the sun off the ice on which it rests. All round the block the ice goes on melting, but that below the granite melts much more slowly. Thus, in time, the block is left standing high above the glacier on a pedestal of the ice which it has protected from the sun. But a day comes when the pedestal of ice becomes too weak to support the huge " table " of stone. The ice breaks, and the big block topples over, and falls to the surface of the glacier, where it covers a new patch of ice, and begins to mount once more.

But the " tables " are not the only stones on the glacier. In some places great piles of rocks and

stones are heaped together, and these are ca
" moraines." As the glacier comes down the mo
tain it gathers masses of rocks, pebbles, gravel,
soil, and as it melts, these are left in piles on its sur
or at its sides. The " moraine " of a great glacier
often be of immense size, forming a hill 1,000
wide and 100 feet high.

Of what service is this crushing and grinding of
mountain-tops—this ploughing of their faces
glaciers ? Of the greatest possible service to
world which lies below—the world of the husbandn
the world of flocks and herds, of crops and till
The mill of the glacier grinds fresh soil, the tor
washes it down, and at the foot of the mountain
fields are formed, and fresh strength is given to
earth exhausted by long service in providing for
needs of man.

XIV

A CLIMB UP A SWISS MOUNTAIN—II

But while we have been occupied with this long
about a glacier, the climbing-party have made re
for their attack on the great white peak which
high above us, and are picking their way carel
across the glacier towards the broad snow-field wl
lies above it, and will form the first stage of the
ascent.

A Climb up a Swiss Mountain

The climbers are five in number—two visitors and three guides. The Swiss guide is a famous fellow, and without his aid many ascents would be quite impossible to the ordinary climber. On all the great peaks guides must be taken, for a stranger, even if a first-rate climber, would be ignorant of many dangers which the guides can teach him to avoid. Brave, hardy, and strong, the Swiss guides will often take a poor climber to the head of a lofty peak, simply dragging and hauling him over the difficult places, never losing their heads, never at a loss, finding their way in storm and snow in most wonderful style, facing every danger with simple, faithful courage and splendid endurance.

Each climber carries an ice-axe. This is a strong staff about 5 or 6 feet long, spiked at the bottom, so that it will not slip on ice or rock, and with a small sharp axe fixed to its head. The axe is used to cut holes in an icy slope too steep for ordinary foothold. The boots of the climbers are studded with strong, sharp nails, to prevent slipping, and they carry crampons to fasten to their boots for marching over places where snow covers the ice. A crampon is a framework of iron set with six sharp iron spikes, and it is placed under the boot, and fastened about the ankle with strong straps. The spikes are in pairs—two under the heel, two under the instep, two under the fore part of the foot. With their aid the climber walks easily over the most slippery ice or across the smoothest rock.

The guides each carry a *rücksack*—a strong linen

bag—slung upon the shoulders like a knapsack, and stored with food and necessaries. Finally, but not last in importance, is the coil of strong rope with which the climbers will fasten themselves together on dangerous places.

They cross the glacier, which is not a dangerous one, and address themselves to the first part of the ascent. This is a long piece of " snow-pounding," as climbers call it—a steady trudge through new-fallen snow—tiring work, but neither difficult nor dangerous.

For some hours they climb steadily upwards. Then the leading guide points out a tiny black spot far up the steep slope.

" There is the hut," he says, and the climbers press forward eagerly towards the resting-place.

What hut ? Are people living up there, half-way between the snowline and the summit ? No ; but on all the great peaks huts have been built to afford shelter to climbers for a night on their way. A big mountain cannot be climbed in a single day. The first day's ascent carries the climbers to a hut or châlet, built very strongly to withstand the fierce storms of the heights, and here they pass the night. This gives them the whole of the next day for the final stage of the journey—the mastering of the real peak itself.

Night is drawing on as the party gains the hut. They lift the latch of the door—it is never locked—and enter. It is empty. They have the place to themselves. No other climbers are on the peak to-day. The guides at once start a fire and prepare supper.

As soon as that is eaten all turn in for a few hours' sleep, for they must be on their way again at two o'clock in the morning.

The chief guide rouses them at half-past one, and hot coffee is made, and a hasty breakfast dispatched. Then they step out into the bitter cold of the Alpine night, with stars twinkling brightly in a sky which looks like velvet. The first thing done is to rope themselves together, for the way is now both difficult and dangerous. The rope is made fast in very careful fashion, and every knot is tied again and again, for their lives may easily depend on the stout cord. The chief guide goes first, then one of the tourists; next comes the second guide, fourth the second tourist, and last of all the third guide. There is about 12 feet of rope between each man. Every one grips his ice-axe firmly, and at the word of the leading guide the file of five figures—five black dots on the snow strung along a dark thread—moves steadily upwards and away from the hut.

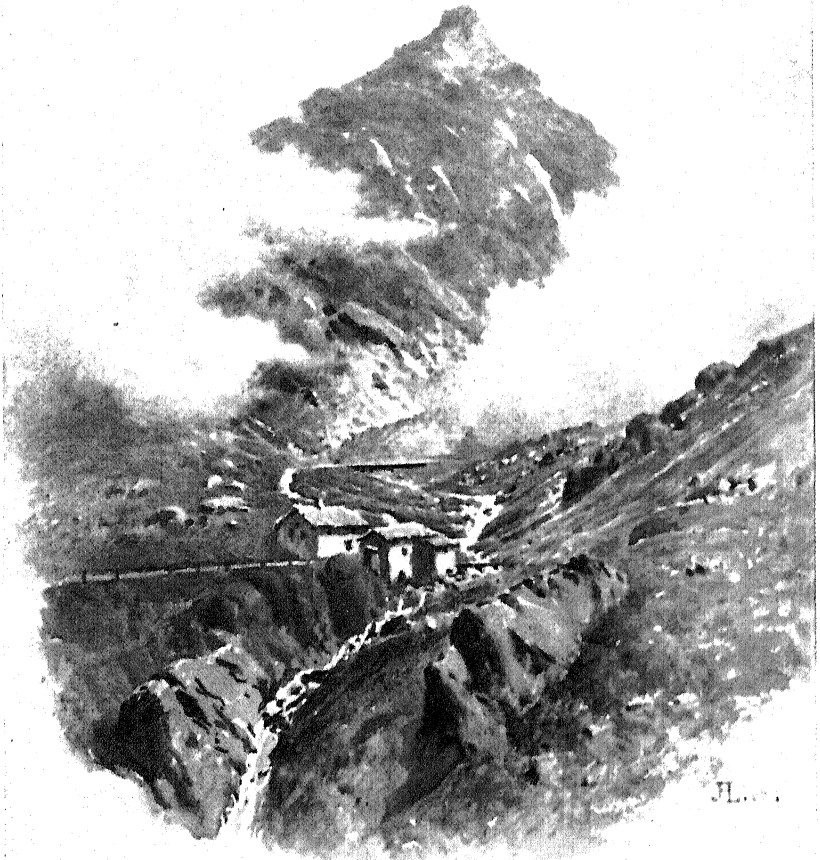
When the first streaks of dawn show in the east, they are working their way along a ridge of frozen snow, and they halt, as the day dawns, to watch the glorious effect of sunrise among the Alps—a thousand peaks all glowing rosy red in the rays of the rising sun.

Hitherto their course has been fairly clear, but now they have to cross an *arête*—an icy ridge, with a frightful abyss on either side. The ridge is narrow, and none may venture upon it unless his head is steady, for the sight of the depths on either hand would cause a climber subject to giddiness to topple headlong.

Switzerland

" Tap-tap ! tap-tap !" The chief guide is at work with his ice-axe. He cuts hole after hole, and their progress is very slow. Only one climber stirs at a time. While he moves his foot from hole to hole the others stand firm, ready to throw their weight on the rope if a slip should be made. But at last the *arête* is passed, and they gain a snow-field which leads them below an icy ridge, where huge *séracs* are clustered—masses of ice and snow resting on the most insecure positions, and ready to fall at any moment. Here the leading guide turns and lays his fingers on his lips. All understand him. Not a word must be spoken, not a sound must be made. A sudden call—a whistle even—and those huge masses would shake, topple over, sweep down upon them, and whirl them away in an avalanche.

They pass and gain a glacier—a new one—not so large as that we saw below, but full of huge crevasses, and to be traversed with the utmost caution. Here they lose much time, for they have to go round crevasse after crevasse. At length they come to a wide one, which stretches away right and left, and cannot be turned. But near at hand a bridge of snow crosses it. The chief guide tries the bridge with his axe, takes a step upon it, and they resolve to attempt the passage.



A MOUNTAIN PASS IN SUMMER.

A Climb up a Swiss Mountain

XV

A CLIMB UP A SWISS MOUNTAIN—III

VERY cautiously the leader moves forward, and the second man follows. Suddenly the leader utters a loud warning cry. The bridge is giving way under him. There are two on the bridge, three on the solid ice at the brink of the crevasse. The three understand the cry, and fling themselves back on the rope with all their weight and strength, driving the points of their ice-axes forward to aid them in the struggle for life now at hand. Scarcely have they braced themselves for the shock than it comes. The bridge disappears in a whirl of flying snow, and their two comrades pitch headlong into the chasm and vanish from their sight.

There is a frightful second while the rope runs taut. Will it hold? If it breaks, all is over with their poor comrades: the Alps will claim two more victims. Ah! the rope tightens upon them with a tremendous strain. It holds: their friends are dangling over the vast abyss. Not a word is uttered. No one has breath to spare for speech. The three clench their teeth and hold on.

A few long, slow seconds pass, and then tap! tap! tap! sounds from the gulf. They know what it means. The chief guide, swinging at the end of the rope, has kept his grip on his ice-axe, and is now

cutting a step in the wall of ice against which he hangs. At the next moment they feel the rope relieved of his weight, and he shouts out in a cool, steady voice for them to draw up.

They do so foot by foot, with infinite caution, and the head of the tourist appears above the brink. He aids himself with his ice-axe, scrambles over the edge, then throws his weight and strength to aid the others, and the four of them fetch up the guide as if hauling up a child. He comes up calm and smiling, and a few words of thankfulness pass for the narrow escape. Had three men been on the bridge, the other two would have been torn from their foothold, and all would have been lost.

They rest for a short time, then search for a better crossing-place, and find it where a thicker snow-bridge crosses a narrower part of the crevasse. Now they take the precaution of unroping and sending over one man at a time, with the rope about his waist and his friends ready to support him if the bridge should fall. But this bridge stands, and they pass the crevasse in safety.

Beyond the glacier lies a great sloping ridge of soft snow, up which they toil painfully. The leading guide gains the crown of the ridge first, and he gives a grunt of deep dissatisfaction. The others hasten to his side, and a new hand at climbing would wonder what is wrong. The guides point to a distant slope, along which puffs of white smoke seem to be racing.

" It is a storm," says the chief guide, " and the wind is bringing it straight upon us."

" Will it last long ?" ask the tourists.

" Who can tell ?" replies the guide.

" Well," they say, " we have come a long way. Let us push on. Perhaps it will soon be over."

The guides look quickly on every hand to fix the landmarks in their minds, for sight will soon be impossible. The storm advances at wonderful speed. The whirl of smoke rushes towards them, and envelops the ridge. It is not smoke at all. It is mist thick with dancing snowflakes. In an instant they are wrapped in a blinding snowstorm, through which they cannot see a dozen yards. With the storm comes a furious wind and most intense cold. The travellers are white from head to foot, and great icicles form on hair and moustache and beard.

Their track is swallowed up instantly. Snow flows into their footprints as if it were water, and leaves a smooth surface behind them. Now the ice-axes are hissing, and their faces feel as if cobwebs were being drawn over them. The cloud which envelops them is electric : they are in the living heart of a thunderstorm. The peals of thunder crash and roll all round them, shaking them from head to foot, and the lightnings flash, as it seems, at arm's length.

But on they push, led in unerring fashion by the chief guide, and, to their joy, the storm thins, breaks, and races away as it had raced upon them. Now the sun shines out again, and swiftly thaws the icicles and snow-wreaths from hair and clothes. It is burning hot, this sunshine falling on the eternal snow, and will take toll of the climbers' faces. The skin will all come

off, and there will be great discomfort for them fo
few days.

The next difficulty is an immense wall of ice, 300
high, and straight up, like the wall of a house.
climbers attack it at once, ice-axes in hand, and ro
ogether. Steps are cut, and they climb slowly
steadily, like five flies walking up a window-pa
Each climbs with the utmost care, for a false step wo
mean that the climber would lose his hold on
slippery ice to which he clings, and then his wei
would fall upon his friends. But to hold up a man
an ice-wall is no slight task, and all might easily
pulled down by the fall of one.

At the top of this ice-cliff they pause and tak
little food. One of the tourists cannot eat. His h
aches, his eyes are dizzy; he draws his breath v
difficulty. He is suffering from the thinness of the
It has become so rarefied that he who speaks m
shout, or his comrade will not hear him. But th
is no thought of turning back on the part of the
who is feeling the climb, and on they go again, foll
ing a narrow icy ledge where there is scarcely roon
set the foot. Here the guides move with the utm
caution, and keep the rope taut, for while on the ri
their shoulders brush against a wall of rock, ther
nothing on the left but thin air between them and
glacier 2,000 feet below.

And so they push on, climbing, scrambling, creep
in one place on all-fours, for that is the only wa
which they can pass a roof-shaped ridge of slipp
rock, until they arrive at a little slope, looking just

a hundred other little slopes which they have climbed. But as they gain the top of this the guides begin to sing and *jödel*, and lo! on the other side of this slope the snow falls away instead of rising once more, and a vast prospect springs to the eye, and they find themselves at the summit of the peak which has defied them for so many weary hours.

One of the guides carries a flag. It is unrolled and waved in triumph. Somewhere in that dim, distant green world, far, far below, a cannon roars. In the valley telescopes are fixed on the summit. The waving flag, the tiny specks which are the figures of the climbers, have been seen, and the cannon is fired in honour of their success.

A short stay is made on the summit; then the descent is begun. This is a very different affair. They cover in an hour a space which had taken them four hours to climb. They come to a long, steep snow-slope which had given them two hours' hard work to ascend. They seat themselves on their knapsacks, trail their ice-axes behind them to steer with, push off, and shoot down to the foot in a few minutes of glorious coasting. They reach the hut before dark, sleep long and calmly, for their victory is won and they have no need to be astir in the small hours, and go down to the valley at their ease the next morning.

in wintry storms. In late autumn and early spring, when the pass is deep in snow and wild snow-flurries sweep over the mountain, it is easy for the foot traveller to miss the row of posts which marks the way across the pass.

The monks and their servants go out after such storms and search the road. The quick scent and wonderful instinct of the great dogs often lead them to some spot where a wayfarer, overcome by the cold and the furious storm, has fallen and lies in the deadly frost-sleep. But if found in time, he may be roused and brought back to life. Many of the dogs show wonderful skill in discovering bodies buried under the snow. Cleverest of all was Barry, a dog who saved many lives during his career, and in whose honour a memorial has been erected.

East, again, of the St. Bernard lies Zermatt, another famous mountain resort, this time entirely Swiss. The pride of Zermatt is the mighty Matterhorn, and a little farther off lies Monte Rosa, with its wonderful wealth of glaciers. The Matterhorn is a lofty peak which springs up as one of a vast circle of gigantic heights in the neighbourhood of Monte Rosa, the highest of them all. Monte Rosa is second only to Mont Blanc, and is the highest Swiss mountain.

The Matterhorn was first climbed on the 14th of July, 1865, and this ascent will never be forgotten, for it was marked by a terrible accident. The climbers were seven in number, four Englishmen and three guides. They reached the summit in safety, and were descending, when the rope which bound them together

XVI

PEAKS AND PASSES

MONT BLANC, the greatest height of the Alps, is not a Swiss mountain; it stands entirely in France. At its foot lies the beautiful valley of Chamonix, thronged all the summer with visitors. The entrance to this valley is a sight never to be forgotten. Chamonix is gained by a noble road, which winds through the gorges of the Arve, a river fed by the snows of the great mountain. The road is lined by rocky uplands, clothed with thick forests of pine and beech; but upon entering the valley the whole range of Mont Blanc bursts upon the traveller's view—a magnificent sweep of snow-clad peaks and pinnacles, with the monarch of the Alps rising above all. Numbers of people every year climb to the head of Mont Blanc, and with good guides the feat is more difficult than dangerous. Almost every one climbs far enough up the broad flanks of the mountain to see the glaciers, chief among them being the famous Mer de Glace, the Sea of Ice.

To the east of Mont Blanc lies the well-known Great St. Bernard Pass, a road still used by crowds of poorer travellers—the workmen and pedlars who cross the Alps to and from Switzerland and Italy on foot. Near the head of the pass stands the monastery of St. Bernard, where live the monks and the famous St. Bernard dogs, which aid in the search of those lost

broke. Three of the English climbers and one guide fell headlong over a lofty precipice, and were killed upon the spot. Two guides and the remaining Englishman were saved. They made their way down the mountain in safety and gave the alarm. A large party went in search of the fallen climbers, but could only bring back their dead bodies.

Another magnificent crowd of mountain giants stands in the Bernese Oberland, to the north of Zermatt and on the other side of the valley of the Rhone. Most glorious of all the Oberland giants is the peerless Jungfrau, the Maiden, in her robe of stainless white, the fairest mountain vision upon earth.

In the Oberland may be seen at its fullest the most striking feature of Swiss scenery—sweet green pastoral valleys hemmed in by mighty walls of rock and ice. Thus do the Wetterhorn and the Eiger rise in tremendous majesty above the vale of Grindelwald. But splendid as are many of the heights of the Oberland, it is to the dazzling vision of the Jungfrau that the eye comes back again and again—the white beautifully-shaped peak "high in the stainless eminence of air," above the dark, grim precipices which lie about its feet.

There are many passes over the Alps leading into Italy, and most of them are traversed by excellent roads. The engineering skill shown on Swiss mountain-roads is simply marvellous. In crossing such tremendous heights one would expect to face the steepest of highways, but it is not so. The roads are laid out in so clever a fashion that one surmounts a

precipitous slope by the easiest of gradients. The road winds and winds to and fro on the face of the hill, sometimes doubling upon itself, but always creeping gently up and up, and rarely containing one of those steep straight slopes common enough on the best of English highways.

The best proof of the perfect grading of a good carriage-road on the Alps is seen in the handling of the diligences, the great stage-coaches still in use where railways have not penetrated. These cumbrous vehicles are drawn by five horses, and the horses will go down at a steady trot, swinging round the many bends and taking the straight runs without any slackening of pace. It would be quite impossible for them to do this if the incline were not gradual and easy all the way.

In the making of these splendid roads the greatest difficulties have been faced and conquered. There are places where the mountain has barred the way with a sheer precipice, as if to say, " Thus far, and no farther." But the engineer was not baffled. He entered the very mountain itself and bored a tunnel along the face of the wall, and lighted his tunnel with holes cut in the solid rock, and thus carried his road along. A dizzy gorge lay athwart his path : he threw a bridge across, and carried his road through mid-air. The avalanche threatened from above : he covered his road with arcades of solid masonry, and the snow-slide passed over and did his track no harm.

Even more wonderful than the roads over these vast mountains are the tunnels beneath them. The Alps

are now pierced by tunnels under Mont Cenis in France, under St. Gothard and the Simplon in Switzerland. The Simplon is the latest and greatest of all. It is 12¼ miles long, and at its deepest point lies more than 7,000 feet below the surface. The work began in 1898, when engineers started to cut into the great mountain from both sides, Italian and Swiss.

Nearly seven years of hard work passed before the tunnel from either side drew near to the other. The work was greatly impeded by hot springs, into which the miners cut, and by the heat of the rock itself at this immense distance underground. At one point a great subterranean river was met with, and no advance could be made until its waters were diverted from the gallery in which the miners were working. One short stretch of tunnel, some 50 yards in length, cost more than £1,000 per yard.

At last, in February, 1905, a charge placed in the *roof* of the Italian boring blew a hole into the *floor* of the Swiss boring, and the two halves of the tunnel were joined at a spot more than six miles from the light of day. After that, progress was rapid; the tunnel cooled swiftly, and the engineers soon had the Simplon route in working order.

Swiss Sports

XVII

SWISS SPORTS—I

THE Swiss do not devote a great deal of time to amusement, for, one and all, they are a working race, and turn to with a will at making a living. But now and again comes a holiday, and then the young people meet for a merry time of song and dance. The Swiss love music dearly, and the music of the voice above all. As the bands of men march over the hills to the meeting-place, they make the mountain ring with their chanting of famous old songs; and a good singer is always sure of an attentive audience.

Dancing is a very popular amusement on a Swiss holiday, but it is rather a solemn business, and it cannot be said that the dancers are very light of foot. The girls trip and turn neatly but soberly, and the dancing of the men is a mere jumping and pounding with the heels on the floor. The music is furnished by one or two violins, while the lookers-on *jödel* in time to the staid movements of their friends.

The young men have their athletic clubs, and at times great festivals are held, when clubs from all parts of the country meet in friendly contest. The athletic sports are of many kinds, and most of them are the same as young men practise in England. But one branch, called the "National" sports, comprises feats which are of much interest to a stranger. In this

branch the competitors lift stones, fling stones, wrestle, and leap.

"In Switzerland wrestling is of two kinds. The one which is called 'Ringen' does not differ in any essential respect from that practised by us English. The point about the other is that the combatants wear loosely-fitting drawers of canvas over their ordinary breeches, with a powerful clasped leather belt. Grip is got by each man grasping the girdle behind his antagonist's back with the left hand, while the other takes firm hold of the loose end of the canvas drawers above the left knee. This is called 'Schwingen,' because it often happens, with the grip described, that one of the wrestlers lifts the other in the air and whirls him round.

"In the course of the struggle the grip changes, and every conceivable form of clasp or grasp may be observed. When two vigorous fellows of equal build and strength are paired—say a couple of herdsmen—wrestling of both sorts is extremely exciting, and not without an element of danger. It is in some respects even more interesting when a young giant, without much practice in the sport, happens to be mated with a dexterous opponent—brute force and weight matched against nimbleness and science. Victory not unfrequently crowns him who looked but mean and contemptible beside the heroic form of his rival.

"Though very rough handling has to be expected in the wrestling-ring, nothing like bad blood or resentment ever came beneath my notice. The victor and vanquished shake hands and drink a cup of wine

together; and after a desperate encounter, in which blood has been drawn and each lies panting on the ground for minutes, you will see the two men rise together, link arms round waists, and walk across the field to take their rest."

Another general sport is shooting with a rifle at a mark, though perhaps this ought to be set down as a duty rather than a sport, for every Swiss is bound to be a marksman, owing to the fact that every man may be called out for military service. Still, the Swiss take great pleasure in rifle practice, and on every Sunday, saint's day, and holiday, rifles crack from morning to night at the ranges provided in every part of the country.

These are the sports of the Swiss themselves, and now, what are the sports of the strangers who flock to the land in such myriads? Well, in the summer there is the great sport of mountain-climbing; but of late years great numbers of people have begun to go to Switzerland in winter for sports on the ice and snow. Not so long ago no one thought of returning to the higher villages of the Alps in the winter. It was believed that they were dreadful wastes of snow, and the cold was too bitter for anyone to endure save the hardy natives. So with the fall of the leaves in autumn the visitors fled, the hotels were shut up until the next summer, and the village was left to its winter sleep.

But now many of those hotels are as busy in the winter as the summer. It has been found that the cold of the dry, pure air of the mountains may easily be

endured—nay, more, is most bracing and delightful. The sun shines radiantly, and its heat is great, though it does not melt the snow. "That dry cold of the heights, with a blazing sun overhead, is to be enjoyed by the most sensitive invalid; indeed, the invalid may sit out of doors more comfortably in winter than in summer, and with less danger." So every winter sees great crowds of people in search of the sun troop up to Swiss hotels standing several thousand feet above the sea-level.

XVIII

SWISS SPORTS—II

THESE visitors amuse themselves by skating, tobogganing, or ski-ing. The skater has a glorious time. Instead of the few chance days when the ice bears in England, he may "be fairly sure of four months' skating upon wide stretches of real ice under a sun as hot as that of an English June day." The great hotels either have their own "rinks" or are on the shores of lakes which are frozen deeply and offer glorious fields of ice to the skater.

But the toboggan affords the sport of sports in a Swiss winter. For the first thing a toboggan demands is a slope down which one may slide, and Switzerland is nothing but slopes. Cover those slopes with snow,

over which the toboggan glides with marvellous ease and swiftness, and there is the tobogganer's paradise.

There are toboggan-runs of all kinds. There is the easy gentle slope of untrodden or hardened snow, down which the little sledge may glide with moderate but pleasant swiftness, and this is the place for the old or the inexperienced. Steeper and steeper slopes afford swifter and swifter speed, and call for more skill and nerve in guidance of the sledge, until one arrives at the last word of the sport—such a run as the famous Cresta run at St. Moritz in the Engadine.

The Cresta run is 1,000 yards long, and winds down the face of a steep hill. The surface is one pure sheet of solid ice, for water is run over the hardened snow, and a single night's frost gives a surface perfectly smooth and glassy. Such a slope may only be ridden by the most skilful riders, for there are turns where the utmost skill is needed to avoid being pitched headlong from the light racing sledge.

Every year contests are held on this run, and the winner—he who accomplishes the run in the shortest time—is awarded a fine cup. The distance has been done in less than a minute, and on some parts of the course a speed of 68 miles an hour has been reached. The racer lies down head foremost on his toboggan, in order to offer as little resistance to the air as possible. He steers with his hands and feet, and at the corners, where the bank is sloped and raised high to prevent his toboggan running off the track, he has to " swing " his sledge—that is, to drag round the head of the sleigh by main force and point it in the new direction. All

this is not very easy, and disasters often occur, when unsklful riders, going at great speed, are flung against banks of ice.

But the ordinary tobogganer does not trouble about trying to make a record on an ice-run. It is his delight to climb a mountain-road for mile after mile, with his light sledge trailing behind him, until he has gained the very summit of the ridge up which the road winds. Then he seats himself on the little sleigh, puts out one foot on each side to steer with, takes a good grip of the rope attached in front, in order to keep him steady in his place, pushes off, and shoots away down the slope.

Nothing more exhilarating than such a run can be imagined. The rider glides through the clean, dry, sweet winter air with the smoothest, easiest motion. Now the toboggan darts with tremendous speed over a sheet of solid ice, and now more quietly over a vast slope of untrodden snow, which rises in clouds about its path. Now the sledge leaves the sunshine and shoots into the dark gloom of a vast pine-wood, where the great trees stand like tall sentinels with helmets of snow; now, again, the toboggan leaps into the sunshine, where the snow glitters like a field of diamonds; and on, on, faster and faster, until with a last swift shoot it reaches the valley and darts far over the level ground, and the rider gives a sigh of regret. The run is over. The climb of hours has been retraced in a run of minutes, but the run was worth the climb—every inch of it.

The third sport, that of ski-ing, is also becoming



A VILLAGE ON THE ST. GOTHARD RAILWAY.
SMOKE IS SEEN COMING OUT OF THE TUNNEL. *Page 66.*

very popular. A pair of skis (pronounced "shees") are two very long strips of wood, the width of the foot, smooth and polished on the under side. They are from 7 feet to 9 feet long, and at first the beginner flounders about on them, trips and stumbles, tangles one foot with the other, and continually loses his balance. But a little practice soon enables him to keep his footing and his balance, and to gain the power of turning, and then his progress is rapid.

An expert performer will do some wonderful things on skis. He will run at forty miles an hour, or, gaining impetus down a steep slope, he will spring 100 feet through the air, drop to earth—or rather to snow—again, and shoot off at terrific speed. But the ordinary ski-walker finds his long, light, wooden shoes of immense value. Upon them he may reach hidden, snowy places, where on his own feet he would plunge neck-deep in the drifts; he can go lightly up the snowy hill-side; he can come back shooting down at whatever pace his skill will permit him to take.

Norway is the home of the ski, but Switzerland has taken to it very kindly. Every winter a part of the Swiss army is practised in marching on skis, and so useful is the ski that old and young have taken it up everywhere. Among the mountains, where perhaps four or five miles of snowy road lie between home and school, the children may be seen trooping along on little skis, skimming over the snow on these long slips of wood, very often home-made, cut out by their fathers' knives beside the evening fire.

XIX

THE CHAMOIS

THE most famous wild animal of Switzerland is the chamois. This beautiful and graceful creature is not often seen by the visitor in its wild state, for it lives high up on the hills, and is very shy, and swift to escape from sound or scent of man. It is a mountain antelope, much about the size of a goat, and weighs, as a rule, from 50 to 70 pounds, though at times a big male will run up to the weight of 100 pounds.

The horns of the chamois are from 10 to 12 inches in length, and at the end are sharply curved over into the shape of hooks. These horns are treasured trophies of the chamois-hunter; and another trophy much sought after is the " beard " of the male chamois. This beard, however, does not grow on the buck's chin, after the fashion of a billy-goat, but along the ridge of the back. In early winter, when the buck has grown his shaggy winter coat, there rises along his backbone a row of long hairs. These hairs are glossy black, except at the tip, where they are yellowish white, and stand upright, waving in the wind. A bunch of these long hairs is greatly treasured by the chamois-hunter as an adornment for his hat on a fête-day. So highly is this plume of hair valued that as much as ten pounds will be paid for a good " beard."

In summer the chamois feed on the grass and moss which grow upon the rocks which thrust themselves

through the snow-fields and glaciers; in winter they come down to the timber-belt, and search for the withered grass protected from snow by the dense branches of the pines, and for the lichen which hangs in long tresses from the same branches. The shelter of these huge trees, whose lower branches almost sweep the ground, is sought at times of great snow-fall, and sometimes this shelter becomes a prison from which there is no escape.

A band of chamois will gather about the stem of a vast pine to seek refuge from the snow. A very heavy fall may press the end of the branches actually flat on the ground all round them. After the snow comes rain, and the outer coat of the snow is melted. Frost follows, and turns the softened snow into a coat of solid ice, through which the chamois cannot break. The poor beasts eat all the food inside their prison and then die of starvation.

This is but one of the dangers which menace chamois in those high, wild regions which they make their home. The avalanche is another. Upon this point one writer says: "Of all wild mountain game chamois are most subject to that one danger of Alpine regions from which there is no escape—avalanches. Only too often the remains of whole bands are found when the June and July sun has at last reduced the masses of snow which held in its relentless grip the score or more of its victims. To show the terrible force of an avalanche, I may mention an occurrence of which I receive the news as I am writing this paragraph. In a district which I know well there is

high up, close to timber-line, a small loch lying at the foot of a steep slope, while a bank of considerable height shuts in the water on the other side. From the former a big avalanche swept down with such suddenness as to engulf a band of chamois, and with such appalling force as to drive every drop of water out of the loch over the brow of the bank. The loch being well stocked with trout, dead fish and dead chamois strewed the slope below the lake, down which the enormous mass of snow, after filling the depression where the lake once was, extended its work of destruction; giant pines snapped off like matches, or bodily uprooted, marking the resistless path of the snow-slide."

The chamois in Switzerland have taken to these lofty regions because for hundreds of years they have been eagerly hunted by the Swiss. In parts of the Alps lying outside Switzerland—in Tyrol and Styria, where they are preserved and guarded by the keepers on great sporting estates—the chamois lose much of their shyness, and come down to the lower slopes of the hills to enjoy the more plentiful supply of food. But in Switzerland, he who would hunt the chamois must have a good head and a sure foot. Like the chamois themselves, he must be at home amid rocks and precipices, and must be able to climb where no path seems to be; he must know how to sit perfectly still for hours at a time, watching and waiting for these shy, wary creatures.

There is no finer climber in the Alps than the first-rate chamois-hunter. He will make his way up a

wall of rock by a path only a few inches wide—a tiny ledge upon which he has barely room to set his feet, while below him falls sheer away a precipice, at the foot of which great trees look like tiny shrubs, a broad river is a silver thread, and feeding cattle are mere dots on the Alp meadow.

At last, perhaps, he comes within sight of a band of chamois. There may be five of them; there may be twenty-five. Now he must crawl and creep more warily than ever, for there stands the sentinel which ever guards a feeding band. This sentinel is always an old female—a doe of experience—and she perches herself on the nearest summit, and watches and sniffs the air continually. Her sight and smell are both of marvellous keenness, and the hunter guards against the first by keeping behind rocks and ridges, and against the second by working up-wind, so that the breeze comes from the chamois towards him.

While she guards them, the rest of the herd feed calmly, and the merry little ones—the kids—skip and play, and indulge in a thousand antics, chasing each other, butting, leaping, racing to and fro, full of frolic and fun. But the scout never relaxes her watch for a moment. Her head turns to every quarter; her nostrils continually draw in the air. It is she whom the hunter watches as he creeps within range, and if he can evade her vigilance he will secure his prey.

But in spite of his utmost care, the keen, wary old doe is almost certain to discover some sign of his presence. Then is seen a striking sight. She gives a loud whistling call, and the others know that it means

danger. The merry little kids forsake their gambols, and each runs to its mother and presses closely against her flank. The older ones leap upon boulders and rocks, and gaze eagerly on every hand to discover the whereabouts of the intruder. A few moments of watchful hesitation pass, and then, perhaps, a wandering breeze gives them a sniff of tainted air, and they fix upon the direction from which the foe is advancing.

Now follows a marvellous scene—that of a band of chamois in full retreat. The speed and agility of their flight is wonderful. They are faced by a precipice. They skim up it one after the other like swallows. There is no path, no ridge, no ledge : but here and there little knobs of rock jut out from the face of the cliff, and they spring from projection to projection with incredible sureness and skill, their four feet sometimes bunched together on a patch of rock not much larger than a man's fist. They vanish with lightning rapidity, and the hunter must turn away in search of another band, for these will not halt till they are far beyond his reach in some sanctuary of the hills quite inaccessible to him.

Very often a number of hunters go together, and close upon the chamois from every side. Then the swift creatures are in a ring, and, as they rush away down-wind, they are bound to come within shot of those posted on the side towards which they flee. Sometimes the chamois are turned back by long stretches of cord set up on sticks, and drawn across places where they could escape from the ring of hunters and drivers. From the cord flutter bright

pieces of cotton cloth—red, blue, or yellow—and at sight of these the chamois face about and try another path. But when driven to the extremity of terror, chamois have been known to dash upon the line of flags, some clearing the obstacle with a flying leap, others bodily charging the rope, and bursting a way through. Very often the latter entangle their horns in the rope, and go whirling through the air in a double somersault. But they are on their legs again in a moment, and off at tremendous speed.

XX

STORIES OF CHAMOIS-HUNTING

We have seen that the chamois-hunter must face many perils in pursuit of his dangerous sport, and many stories are told of narrow escapes from death. One day a hunter left his mountain home and went in search of a big buck which he knew was in the habit of feeding beyond a certain great glacier. While crossing this glacier the hunter fell into a deep crevasse, whose mouth was hidden by a thin layer of snow. He was stunned by the fall, and hours passed before he came to himself. Then he found that he was in a living grave. The walls of ice sloped in such a way and were so smooth, that it was impossible to climb them. He knew that he could not expect help. He

had not told anyone which way he meant to go, and the glacier was in a very lonely part of the mountain, far from any human habitation. Nor would uneasiness be felt if he did not return to his home that night, for he was often absent several days on a chamois-hunt. It seemed as if certain death from cold awaited him in that icy cavern.

But he was a bold fellow, not at all disposed to surrender his life easily, and, seeing no hope above, he looked below. He was surprised at once to find how little water was in the crevasse, for as a rule there is a pool at the bottom formed by the melting of the sides when the sun shines into the huge chasm. But there was only a slight trickle past his feet.

He bent down, and found that the water ran away through a tiny tunnel. The sun had melted the base of the glacier, and water had eaten its way through the solid ice. He flung himself on his face and thrust himself into this dark hole, and worked his way forward. It was a terribly hard task as he fought his way inch by inch, the icy water soaking him and chilling him to the bone. But at last, to his immense joy, he saw daylight before him, and he crept out at the foot of the glacier into the sunshine, safe and sound.

A peasant was out one day aiding huntsmen, when one of the latter wounded a large buck chamois. The chamois made off to a spot where the rocks shelved away to a tremendous precipice, and the peasant followed. He had a rifle, but he laid it down, in order to have his hands free for climbing; nor did he think that the rifle would be needed.

But the chamois was only wounded very slightly, and when the peasant attempted to seize it, the powerful buck attacked him furiously with its horns. There was a severe struggle, and in the course of this struggle the chamois managed to drive the sharp hook of one of its horns through the tendon of the peasant's right heel. Locked together in this strange fashion, the contest went on, and the man fought harder still when he saw that they were on the very brink of the frightful precipice which yawned below. Then the chamois slid over the brink, still hooked to the man's foot, kicking furiously, and dragging the peasant down the last yard of the shelving rock, where neither foothold nor handhold could be gained.

Death stared the man in the face, and his last hope was almost gone, when he felt a branch brushing his cheek. He seized it at the very moment that he fell over the precipice; so there he hung in mid-air, clutching the branch with the grip of despair, while the kicking, struggling buck hung from his heel.

Fortunately for him, one of his comrades observed his plight, and ran to his help. Man and buck were drawn up again to the shelf of rock, and the peasant was released from his perilous position. But had the branch once parted, he would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks a thousand feet below.

A young chamois-hunter was once climbing a steep slope in pursuit of a small band of chamois, when he heard a tremendous roaring far above his head. He looked up and saw an avalanche sweeping down full upon him. He glanced back, but retreat was im-

possible. The avalanche would be upon him long before he could reach the foot of the clear, open slope. He looked up, and began to climb again with frenzied haste. A little above, a great rock jutted out from the face of the slope. If he could gain its shelter, it might break the rush of the avalanche; and he strained every nerve to gain the hollow beneath the huge outcrop of stone.

Down, down swept the avalanche, and up he climbed, faster and faster. It was a race for life, and as he flung himself into the shelter of the rock, the blast of the advancing destruction swept over his head. Had he been two seconds later the wind would have swept him away to certain death.

To his surprise, he saw that the hollow beneath the rock was already tenanted. A chamois doe and her two kids were crouching there for refuge. He joined them, and at the next moment the tremendous field of snow swept over them and buried them many feet deep.

The young hunter hoped that the avalanche would pass, but it did not. Hours went by, and still all was black and dark in the hollow beneath the rock. Then he knew that the avalanche had settled over his hiding-place, and that he was buried alive.

He wondered if people would come in search of him. But how could they discover the proper place in which to dig? He remembered that not long before he had been one of a party which had dug for eight days in search of a friend lost under the snow. But their search was in vain, and they had been compelled to

abandon their quest, and wait until the sunny days of spring should melt the snow and bring the body to light.

For a long time he gave no heed to the chamois and her kids close beside him, so filled was he with horror at the thought of the fate which hung over him. Then he heard the doe begin to stamp her hoofs and make sounds as if she were striking her head against the snow-wall which shut in their hiding-place.

Then she began to scrape with her fore-feet, and the noise of her efforts aroused him from the stupor into which he had fallen. He crept towards the place, and found that she was digging a tunnel. A gleam of hope sprang up in his heart. He knew not where to work to make a way out, but perhaps the chamois did. Man and chamois now worked together, scraping and scraping, the man with his hands and the chamois with her fore-feet. Three hours' hard work proved that the instinct of the doe was not wrong. The crust of snow became thinner, and light was seen through it. At last they broke out into the sunshine. They were saved. The mother doe and her young bounded gaily away up the snowy slope, and the mountaineer turned downwards and sought his home. He was full of gratitude for the wonderful manner in which his life had been preserved. He never shot a chamois again.

XXI

THE FOHN

SOMETIMES in early spring the weather-wise Swiss look to the south and mark strange changes in the sky. A light veil of many-coloured clouds is seen resting on the top of the mountains. The sun goes down pale and rayless in a dark-red sky. The clouds glow with bright purple tints. The moon comes up with a reddish halo round it. "Ah!" they say, "the Föhn wind is coming."

A few wild, cold gusts of wind blow, then all is silent again. But man, beast, and bird know by this that the Föhn is coming. All are restless and disturbed. The air is wonderfully clear: far-off peaks seem near at hand. Then a rustling is heard among the forests of the hill-sides, and the roar of torrents sounds nearer and clearer through the silent air, and of a sudden a hot, dry wind begins to blow with tremendous fury. The Föhn has arrived.

In some valleys and gorges the Föhn assumes the force of a hurricane. It tears down huge trees, unroofs houses and cattle-sheds, does untold mischief. And yet its force is the least of its dangers to a Swiss village. It is so hot and so dry that every wooden house, every mountain châlet, becomes for the moment a huge bundle of tinder. As soon as the Föhn begins to blow, the fire is extinguished on every hearth in many a village. In some places watchmen at once

begin to make their rounds to see that precaution is taken. A single spark on the wings of this burning wind is enough to cause a great and disastrous fire. Hundreds of Swiss villages have been burned down from end to end during a visitation of the Föhn.

Every one feels the influence of this tremendous wind. Birds hide themselves from it, and not one is to be seen. Animals are at first very lively, then become relaxed and dull, and are clearly suffering and miserable. Man feels the discomfort as keenly as anyone. Few people are well while the Föhn is blowing; it both irritates and relaxes, and severely affects the nervous system, causing a strange oppression of the spirits.

And yet the Föhn is welcome. It is hailed with joy as a liberator. It frees the country from the bonds of winter with a swiftness which no other agency of Nature can show. Snow and ice melt at its touch with magical speed. In a single day the Föhn will do more than a fortnight of bright sunshine. It has been known to melt a covering of snow 30 inches deep, in a few hours. There are valleys in the Alps, lying under the shadow of great mountains, into which the rays of the sun never fall. Without the Föhn they would remain an eternal wilderness of snow. But the warm wind breathes upon them, and their snows vanish, and they garb themselves with tender green, sweet to the climbing herds, and gem themselves with flowers.

There are parts of the Alps where the Föhn is a friend beyond ordinary. It melts glaciers and snowfields, and gives a greater range of pasture to the

feeding animals. It permits the flocks to go up to the Alp meadows at an earlier season, thus prolonging the short summer. On the other hand, it often deals out destruction to the dwellers in the valley. Its heat loosens vast masses of snow, and launches them down the mountain-side as avalanches, to carry all before them.

The Föhn is not always a fierce wind. "Sometimes in the Higher Alps, more particularly in autumn and early spring, the Föhn will blow gently for weeks together, accompanied by the most beautiful weather, whilst in the valley there is either no prevailing wind, or a slight breeze from the north. Hence the curious fact that sometimes in December and January some spot lying high in the mountains will be found green and fertile, blossoming with spring gentians, and inhabited by gnats and lizards, while down in the valley the pine-branches groan under the weight of snow."

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